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# THE BEACON BIOGRAPHIES

EDITED BY

M. A. DEWOLFE HOWE

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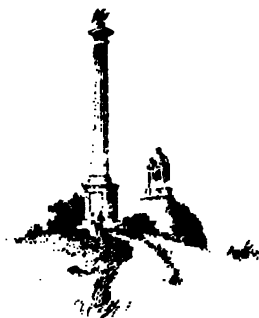
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**Americans**

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# A A R O N B U R R

BY

HENRY CHILDS MERWIN



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## PREFACE.

*The materials for this sketch have been drawn largely from the Life of Burr written by the late James Parton. Mr. Parton had access not only to books and manuscripts relating to Burr, but also to many persons who had known him personally, and had been impressed by his peculiar traits. Enjoying these advantages, and having a marked talent for biography, Mr. Parton produced a book as interesting as a novel; and yet he did not quite succeed in laying bare the central motive-power of Burr's character, he did not paint a figure so lifelike as are, for example, the figures of Thackeray. Much less can the present writer have succeeded in so difficult a task, but he has endeavored to state the problem fairly. Almost every important act in Burr's public career is susceptible of a double interpretation, and was diversely construed by his contemporaries. Never was there a man more warmly loved or more bit-*



*terly hated. His life, therefore, presents a most interesting study, aside from the fact that he played a brilliant part in the Revolutionary War, at the bar, and in politics, and that it was he who caused the tragic death of Alexander Hamilton.*

H. C. M.

SEPTEMBER, 1899.



1774

Began the study of law at Litchfield, Connecticut, with Tappan Reeve, his brother-in-law.

1775

*July.* Joined Washington's army at Cambridge.

*September 20.* Started from Newburyport with Benedict Arnold's expedition to Canada.

*December 31.* Took part in the storming of Quebec.

1776

*April.* Left Arnold, and in May joined the staff of General Washington at New York.

*June.* Resigned his position with Washington, and joined the staff of General Putnam.

*September 15.* Rescued the brig General Knox.

1777

*July.* Placed in

of a r

## CHRONOLOGY

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1777 (*continued*)

*September.* Routed the enemy at Hackensack.

*November.* Joined the main army at Valley Forge.

1778

*January.* Placed in command of "The Gulf."

*June 28.* Commanded a brigade in the battle of Monmouth.

1779

*January.* Placed in command of "The lines" in Westchester County.

*March 10.* Resigned from the army.

*June.* Carried despatches to Washington from General McDougall.

*July.* Led an impromptu defence of New Haven.

1780-81

Was recuperating and studying law.

1782

*January.* Passed an examination at Albany for admission to the bar.

*July 2.* Married to Theodosia Prevost.

1783

*December.* Removed to New York.  
His daughter Theodosia was born.

1784-85

Member of the State Assembly.

1789

*September 27.* Appointed Attorney-General.

1791

*January.* Elected to the United States Senate.

1794

Rejected by Washington as a candidate for the office of minister to France.  
His wife died.

1797

Failed of re-election to the United States Senate.

Elected to the New York Assembly.

1797-99

Engaged in law business, in speculation, and in rebuilding the Republican party in the State of New York.

*September 2, 1799.* Fought his first

## 1801

*February.* Chosen Vice-President of the United States.

*February 2.* His daughter Theodosia married to Joseph Alston.

## 1804

*April.* Defeated as a candidate for Governor of New York.

*July 11.* Duel with Hamilton.

*July 21.* Indicted for murder, and left New York for the South.

*October.* Indicted in New Jersey.

*December.* Resumed his duties as Vice-President at Washington.

## 1805

*February.* Presided at the trial of Judge Chase.

*March 3.* Took leave of the Senate.

*April 10.* Left Philadelphia for the West and South.

*April 30.* Embarked at Pittsburg, and sailed down the Ohio.

*June 25.* Arrived at New Orleans.



1805 (*continued*)

*September.* Stopped at St. Louis on his return.

*November.* Returned to Washington.

*December.* Went to Philadelphia.

1806

*January-April.* At Philadelphia, preparing for the Western expedition.

*April.* Applied to Jefferson for a foreign appointment.

*August.* Started down the Ohio.

*November.* Arrested, tried, and acquitted at Frankfort, Kentucky.

1807

*January.* Arrested at Natchez, but released by the grand jury.

Fled across the Mississippi.

*February.* Arrested in Alabama, and sent North.

*May-June.* Trial at Richmond, Virginia; Acquitted.

1808

*June.* Sailed for England.

*July 16.* Arrived in London.

## CHRONOLOGY

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1808 (*continued*)

*December* 22. Started for Edinburgh.

1809

*February*. Returned to London.

*April* 4. Taken into custody by officers from the Foreign Office.

*April* 24. Sailed for Gottenburg, Sweden.

*October* 21. Crossed to Denmark.

1810

*February* 16. Arrived in Paris.

1811

*July* 20. Procured a passport after more than a year's delay.

*October* 1. Sailed for home on the *Vigilant*.

The ship being captured and taken to Yarmouth, Burr went up to London.

1812

*March*. Sailed in the *Aurora* from Gravesend.

*May*. Arrived at Boston.

*June* 7. Returned to New York, where

he spent the rest of his life, engaged in practising law.

*July.* Received a letter announcing the death of his grandson ; and a few months later Theodosia was lost at sea.

1833

Married the widow Jumel.

*December.* Suffered a slight paralytic shock.

1834

Was rendered helpless by a second stroke.

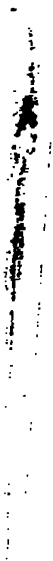
1836

*June.* Was removed to Port Richmond on Staten Island.

*September 14.* Died.

*September 16.* Was buried at Princeton.

AARON BURR



## AARON BURR.

### I.

AARON BURR was born at Newark, New Jersey, in February, 1756, of the purest and most pious stock that New England could boast.

His father, the Rev. Aaron Burr, had been for twenty years minister of the Presbyterian church in Newark ; and he was also president of the College of New Jersey, or Nassau Hall, which in the year of his son's birth was moved to Princeton, and became known as Princeton College. He was still a young man, however, having been settled at the age of twenty-two. In figure and in many of his traits Aaron Burr, the younger, closely resembled his father, who is described as short and slight, but well and compactly built, "with clear, dark eyes of a soft lustre, quite unlike the piercing orbs of his son." He was noted, as was his son, for the peculiar dignity and

fascination of his manner, for his great courtesy and tact, for the clear, concise style of his speaking and writing, for his indifference to public opinion, for his skill as a teacher, for his generous expenditure of time and money in the education of his numerous *protégés*, and, finally, for his immense energy and disregard of illness, fatigue, or any other obstacle in his path.

His wife was Esther, the third daughter of Jonathan Edwards. He first saw her in 1746, while he was on a short visit to her father in Stockbridge, where Mr. Edwards, with his wife and ten children, was then living. Esther Edwards was at that time a girl of fifteen ; and Mr. Burr did not see her again till 1752 when he paid another visit to Stockbridge, remaining but three days. Those three days, however, the business appears to have been transacted, for weeks after his return he sent an undergraduate to bring Esther

her mother to Princeton. They arrived on Saturday, May 27 ; and on the following Monday, in the evening, the wedding took place.

The "patriarchal" style of President Burr's courtship provoked some good-humored comment at the time, but the marriage turned out most happily. The home letters of a boy who was then a student at the college have been preserved, and in one of them he says of Mrs. Burr, "I think her a person of great beauty, though I must say she is rather too young for the president," who was thirty-eight years of age.

Esther Edwards was beautiful, vivacious, and deeply religious. She had been married only about four years when her husband died of a fever produced by overwork and hard travelling in hot weather ; and the widow was left with two small children, Aaron, not yet a year old, and Sarah about two years old.



A month after her husband she wrote to her father : "My has been sick with a slow fever since my brother left us, and brought to the brink of the grave. I hope in mercy God is bringing him back again. I was enabled, after a severe struggle with nature, to be reconciled with the greatest freedom. He showed me that the children were not my own, but his, and that I had no right to recall what he had said. A few days after this, one evening, talking of the glorious state to which my departed husband must be in, he was carried out in such largeness of soul after that glorious state that I was enabled to retire from the family to my joy. . . . I think, dear sister, that night a foretaste of heaven. I slept but little ; and, when I awoke, my dreams were all of heavenly things."

Of such parentage came the

Burr whose name, whether rightly or wrongly, has been for half a century a by-word for irreligion, profligacy, and falsehood.

Within a few months death deprived the fatherless children of all their near relatives,—their mother, their grandfather, Jonathan Edwards, who had succeeded his son-in-law as president of the college, and Jonathan Edwards's wife. Their father had left property amply sufficient for their support; and they were brought up in the family of their uncle, Jonathan Edwards's eldest son, the Rev. Timothy Edwards, who lived at Elizabethtown.

They had for tutor Tappan Reeve, afterward judge of the Supreme Court of Connecticut, who fell in love with Sarah Burr, and married her when she was seventeen. She was long an invalid, and died before reaching middle life. She is said to have been of a noble and commanding face and figure; and it is

certain that her brother cherished her memory, and often spoke of her.

It was almost inevitable that a boy of Aaron Burr's spirit should run away to sea; and this he did at the early age of ten, escaping to New York, fifteen miles distant from Elizabethtown, and shipping as cabin boy on a vessel about to sail. The next morning, however, while the ship still lay at the wharf, the Rev. Timothy Edwards boarded her. The boy, who was at work upon the deck, saw him coming, and immediately sprang into the rigging, and climbed to the mast-head. His uncle ordered him down, but, being unable to fetch him, was placed at an obvious disadvantage. His commands soon softened into entreaties and finally became a negotiation, as the result of which Aaron returned to home, but with a guarantee that no punishment should be inflicted. The Timothy Edwards was a kind and

his nephew as occasion required, but he seems to have had no influence over him. Pierpont Edwards, the famous lawyer, another uncle of Aaron Burr, but only six years his senior, was at school with him for a time at Elizabethtown, and, in a letter written when Aaron was seven years old, he says, "Aaron Burr is here, is hearty, goes to school, and learns bravely."

At eleven Aaron was prepared to enter Princeton College, having read Virgil and acquired the Greek alphabet; but he was rejected on account of his youth. He did his best, however, to accomplish the same object by mastering at home the studies of the first two college years, and then in his thirteenth year applying for admission to the Junior Class. This application also was refused; but he was permitted, as a special favor, to join the Sophomore Class, although the limit of age for that class was fifteen years. The boy entered college with an

extravagant idea of the learning and capacity of his classmates ; and being resolved, nevertheless, that they should not outstrip him, he applied himself to his books with the greatest ardor. Finding that he could not study so well after dinner as before, he became very abstemious, and under this regimen he is said to have labored sixteen and sometimes even eighteen hours a day ; and it is not surprising that he looked pale and ill. When the examination came, Burr found himself so far in advance of his classmates that the motive to extraordinary exertion no longer existed, and thenceforth he was as idle as he had formerly been industrious. All through life, however, he was a great reader.

Burr was popular with his fellow-students, and took a leading part in the college societies and amusements. One incident of his career at Princeton survived. He belonged to a literary club called the Cliosophic, the me

of which presided in turn at its meetings. Professors as well as students were members of the society, and on one occasion it happened that Burr was in the chair when a professor by whom he had often been admonished came in late. Burr, with that self-possession for which he was ever noted, ordered the professor to rise and then administered to him a dignified rebuke for his want of punctuality, observing that the older members of the club were expected to set a good example to the younger, and concluding with the hope that he should not be obliged to recur to the subject again. The astonished professor was then permitted to take his seat, amid the laughter of the assembly. Several of Burr's college compositions have been preserved ; and, though they do not show much imagination, they do exhibit a maturity of thought astonishing in a boy of fifteen.

In 1772, at the age of sixteen, Burr


was graduated with the highest honors; and at Commencement he delivered an oration which was well, but not enthusiastically, received. He made, it was said, "a graceful appearance," but spoke too rapidly and with too much emphasis. For about a year after graduation Burr continued at Princeton, as his father had done, studying, reading, and enjoying such pleasures as the place afforded. In the summer he spent much time at Elizabethtown, where he gained a knowledge of boating, which was of service to him in after years.

He was deliberating upon the choice of a profession, and he even seems to have had thoughts of entering the ministry. At this time he was, apparently, a believer in Orthodox Christianity, though not what was called a professor of it. During Burr's Senior year at Princeton a great revival occurred in the college. Many of the undergraduates were converted; and Burr,

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from his popularity and from the specially religious nature of his ancestors, became a particular object of entreaty. It is said that he was moved by this, and that he consulted Dr. Witherspoon, president of the college, as to the character of the scenes which were taking place about him. The clergy at this time were divided in opinion upon the subject of revivals, most of those who had been educated in England disapproving of them. Dr. Witherspoon, a descendant of John Knox, belonged to this class; and he, it is said, dissuaded Burr from yielding to the spirit of the revival, assuring him that it was fanatical rather than religious.

A year after his graduation Burr resolved to settle the religious question once for all in his own mind by pursuing a course of investigation under Dr. Joseph Bellamy, of Bethlehem, in Connecticut. Dr. Bellamy had studied theology under Jonathan Edwards, and





was himself a famous preacher writer upon theological subjects whom so many candidates for the ministry resorted that his house became a theological seminary upon a small scale. Hither in the autumn of 1773 Burr repaired, and with his accustomed assiduity entered upon the course which he proposed.


Dr. Bellamy prided himself upon his skill in the Socratic method, a large portion of his instruction being given by question and answer; and he would frequently invite a pupil to assume the part of a sceptic, and raise objections against Christian faith for him, the doctor to answer. His object was, of course, to teach the young men to think for themselves and to analyze the grounds of their belief. But this method proved unavailing with Aaron Burr. Burr had an extraordinarily acute, alert, and logical mind and a coolness of disposition which gave him control of all his resources and

the most disturbing conditions. When the Rev. Dr. Bellamy encountered this opponent in the guise of a pupil, the result was disastrous. In the following spring Burr left Dr. Bellamy's house, convinced, to use his own language, that "the road to heaven was open to all alike." Ever afterward he avoided disputes upon the subject of religion; but when, as often happened, he was importuned by those who had known his father or his mother to follow in their footsteps, he met these advances with unfailing civility, and sometimes even with tenderness. Burr's nature was essentially irreligious; and his case might be cited in support of Mr. Galton's theory that qualities which are predominant in one generation are often exceptionally deficient in the succeeding one, reappearing again, perhaps, in the third or fourth generation.

Upon leaving Dr. Bellamy, Burr determined to study law with his sister's

husband, Tappan Reeve, at Litchfield, in Connecticut. There he spent the summer of 1774, amusing himself with his horse and with "the girls," to whom there are frequent allusions in his letters. One girl made a declaration of love to him; and his uncle, Thaddeus Burr, endeavored to persuade him into marriage with another, who was heiress to a large fortune. Burr was at this time a gay, handsome, rollicking young man, generous of heart, cool of head, greatly beloved, and much deferred to by his friends, many of whom were persons of high character, whose regard he always retained, despite the faults and vices of his later life.

Aaron Burr, like other young men, was keenly alive to the mutterings of revolution which now began to be heard; and during the summer of 1774 his studies were altogether in military science and history. In the same summer a youth still younger—a striy




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to his most intimate friend, Matthias Ogden of New Jersey, urging him to come on and join the army ; but Ogden was unable to leave home at that time, and Burr restrained his impatience till news came of the battle of Bunker Hill. Burr then set off immediately for Elizabethtown to assist Ogden in his preparations, and in July the two young men joined Washington's army at Cambridge. Burr was now but nineteen years old, and a mere boy in appearance.

The gathering at Cambridge was less an army than a mob of seventeen thousand men, half-armed, ill-clad, and undisciplined. The officers were, for the most part, either ignorant of their duty or else reluctant to give offence by performing it; and there was among them a continual bickering about rank, increased by the jealousy which prevailed between men of different States and of different cliques. As yet Burr



was attached to no particular corps. He mingled indiscriminately with conflicting factions, until, disgusted with the daily scene, he fell ill of a nervous fever.

In this situation he overheard one day his friend Ogden talking in the next room with some other young men about an expedition which was soon to take place. He called Ogden to his bedside and inquired of what expedition they were speaking. Ogden told him that Colonel Benedict Arnold, with a force of ten or twelve hundred men, was about to proceed through the wilderness of Maine and Canada for the purpose of attacking Quebec. Burr thereupon rose up in bed, declaring that he would join the expedition; and, though much enfeebled, he began at once to put on his clothes, despite the expostulations of Ogden and the others. He set about his arrangements immediately; and on September 14, with four or five associates whom he had selected, he shoulder

his musket, and started for Newburyport, about fifty miles from Boston, whence the expedition was to sail for the Kennebec River. Ogden and some others made the same journey in carriages.

At Newburyport young Burr received a shower of letters from his friends and relatives, entreating him not to join the expedition. Dr. James Cogswell, in particular, assured Burr in the most vehement manner that he would inevitably die in the undertaking. His uncle Timothy Edwards sent a special messenger, armed with a letter, and with instructions to bring the young fugitive back, by force if necessary. Having read the letter and listened to the message, Burr calmly said to the messenger: "How do you expect to take me back? If you were to make a forcible attempt upon me, I would have you hung up in ten minutes." Thereupon the messenger produced a second



letter from Timothy Edwards, and with it a small bag of gold. This second letter was couched in the most affectionate language. It depicted the sufferings which Burr must endure if he accompanied the expedition to Quebec, and earnestly begged him to abandon the attempt. Burr is said to have been affected to tears, and he wrote a respectful reply.

About September 20 the troops, to the number of eleven hundred, embarked in eleven transports, and sailed without accident to the mouth of the Kennebec. There they found provided for them two hundred light bateaux, in which they ascended that beautiful river; and in a few days they left behind them the last outpost of civilization. Thence by the upper Kennebec, and by numerous connecting streams and lakes, usually separated by a "carry," the army made its toilsome way through the wilderness. Thirty times or more the boats with all

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their contents — ammunition, provisions, and sick men — had to be carried from one water to another, over hills and across marshes ; and, when the bateaux were finally launched in Dead River, many of them were wrecked, and half the store of provisions was lost. In a few days more the soldiers were reduced to living upon dogs or reptiles, and at length to devouring the leather of their shoes and cartridge boxes, and anything else, however loathsome, which contained the smallest nutriment. It was fifty days after leaving Newburyport before Arnold saw the heights of Quebec. The distance travelled was about six hundred miles, and more than half the force was lost by disease and desertion.


During the first part of the journey the weather was pleasant and provisions were abundant, so that Burr had fully recovered his health and strength before the cold autumnal rains set in and before the rations were reduced. Moreover,

the habit which he had acquired in college of living upon a small quantity of food stood him in good stead in this time of privation. Contrary to the impression of his friend, Dr. Coggswell, Burr's nervous constitution and slight but well-made body were peculiarly fit for the endurance of fatigue; and his skill as a helmsman, his courage, lively spirit, and enthusiasm rendered him a favorite in the command. In after years it was hard to make any one think ill of Aaron Burr who had served with him in the wilderness under Benedict Arnold.

It was necessary that Arnold should announce his arrival to General Montgomery at Montreal, and Burr was selected for this dangerous and difficult duty. Knowing that the French population, and their clergy in particular, had never become reconciled to British rule, Burr disguised himself as a priest, and proceeded to the house of a learned father, with whom he communicated by

means of Latin. A few minutes' conversation showed him that it would be safe to reveal his true character and to ask for assistance. The priest, taking him to be a mere boy, at first endeavored to dissuade him from undertaking a journey so hazardous and so long. Montreal was distant one hundred and twenty miles. Finding, however, that the stripling was determined, the good father gave him a guide and a rude carriage; and, after some difficulties, Burr reached his destination. Montgomery was so pleased with him and with his conduct that he gave Burr a position upon his staff, with the rank of captain.


It was now near the end of November. The ground was covered with snow, and the Canadian winter had begun. Montgomery put himself at the head of three hundred men, and, marching through a succession of blinding snow-storms, joined the little army of Arnold, already



shivering under the heights of Quebec. There were some delays and some changes of plan, and in the mean time the soldiers suffered greatly from cold and from small-pox. By December 20th the preparations were completed, and it was settled that the attack should take place on the first night when a snow-storm prevailed. Night after night the moon shone clear on the lofty citadel of Quebec, and never clearer than on the last evening of the year 1775. But about midnight the sky became overcast, and soon afterward there set in a north-east snow-storm of unusual violence. Montgomery was aroused. He ordered his men into line; and by two o'clock the whole force—the leading column commanded by Montgomery himself, with Burr at his side—was in motion.

The outworks consisted of two lines of barricades—which were easily removed—and a block-house defended by

non loaded with grape-shot. The sentries fled to the block-house, and communicated their terror to the sailors and militia men stationed there, so that the whole party abandoned the place in a panic. This, unfortunately, was not known to the Americans; and Montgomery waited until about two hundred of his men had contrived to scramble up the ice-encumbered hill. Then the column advanced; but at that very moment a sailor who had fled from his post ventured back to the block-house. Seeing the Americans approaching, he turned to run away again; but, as he turned, he performed an act which decided the fortunes of the day, and gave Canada back to Great Britain. He touched off one of the grape-charged cannon. Montgomery fell dead, and so did every other man who marched in front of the column except Burr and the guide. The day was just dawning, and the soldiers were soon aware of the catastrophe. The com-



mand fell into incompetent hands. were hesitation, wavering, and action, and finally a determination back, although Burr was vehement to the point of mutiny in urgent advance.

The enemy now returned in for the retreat soon became a disflight. Then occurred a classic in Burr, with the greatest difficulty, dered the dead body of his gen very tall man ; and, staggering unburden, ran down the gorge w enemy only forty paces behind, u avoid capture, he was compelled to drop the body and hasten after treating troops. This act was wi by Burr's college friend, Samuel f who was chaplain of the army. that hour Burr never saw him unt met, fifty years later, in the city of York. They would not have met had Mr. Spring's son been able to prevent it ; for he warned his father

would inevitably lose caste by visiting his former friend. The old gentleman, however, replied that the image of little Burr, staggering through the snow under the weight of Montgomery's body, was too vivid in his mind for him to follow the politic advice of his son; and the visit was paid.

The death of Montgomery left Arnold in command of the whole American force, and he immediately appointed Burr his brigade major. In the spring the army was compelled to retreat to Montreal; and Burr, having become disgusted with Arnold, determined to leave him. Arnold strongly objected; but Burr replied in his usual suave manner, "Sir, I have a boat in readiness, I have employed four discharged soldiers to row me, and I start from Crow Point at six o'clock to-morrow morning." And start he did, although Arnold was on hand in the morning, and endeavored to prevent him, first by commands and then by en-



treaties. Arnold, though a madman in battle, is said to have been lazy and self-indulgent in camp; and no doubt he profited by Burr's activity and skill as an executive officer.

Burr's reputation had preceded him; and upon his arrival home he found a letter from his friend Ogden, who had returned to New Jersey after the repulse at Quebec, which informed Burr that he had been appointed to the staff of General Washington. Ogden mentions incidentally that he had sold Burr's horse and spent the money,—a kind of proceeding which Burr (such were his generosity and evenness of temper) never resented.

Burr's stay in the family of Washington was short. The youthful aide-de-camp failed to appreciate the slow but solid sense of the general, and the clerkly duties which he was called upon to perform were extremely irksome to him. In July of this year he gladly accepted appointment upon the staff of General Putnam.

Washington's distrust of Burr originated at this time, but whether it arose from any special act or was founded upon instinctive repugnance is not known. At all events, in this case as in others Washington did not allow his personal feeling to interfere with his selection of public officers. More than once in the succeeding years he chose Burr for posts of special danger and difficulty.

Hamilton also, it will be remembered, closed his career as Washington's aide-de-camp with angry words ; and so strong was the feeling between him and the commander-in-chief that, when he was afterward appointed Secretary of the Treasury, Hamilton remarked to a friend that he should have expected rather to be chosen as a papal nuncio than to receive a seat in the cabinet of Washington.

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### III.

SEPTEMBER fifteenth, 1776, the British descended upon Manhattan Island, and the American army fled to Harlem. Burr was in the rear ; and, passing by what is now Grand Street, he came upon a small turf fort, in which General Knox with his brigade, left behind by some accident, had taken refuge. The British had landed nearly four miles above the battery, and General Knox supposed them to be in possession of the whole upper part of the island. Burr endeavored to convince him that there was yet time to escape ; and he pointed out that the fort was not bomb-proof, and contained neither provisions nor water. General Knox, however, declared that to attempt a retreat would be madness ; and he refused to stir.

By this time the officers of the brigade had gathered round, and Burr addressed himself to them. He declared that,

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they remained where they were, they would all be prisoners before night or hung like dogs ; that it was better for half the corps to fall fighting its way out than for all to be taken and rot in a dungeon. He added that he knew the roads of the island perfectly, and would lead them safely to the main body of the army if they would follow him. Officers and men agreed ; and they marched out, Burr riding in advance and returning at intervals to reassure the terrified troops. They met with some difficulties ; and at one point Burr, followed by a few horsemen, attacked and dispersed an advance guard of the British. Finally, he succeeded in bringing the brigade to the main body of the army, with the loss of a few stragglers only. This feat became the talk of the army ; but it was not even mentioned in the despatches of the commander - in - chief,—an omission which Burr always regarded as an intentional slight.



While Burr was with General Putnam, there was for a short time another member of the general's official family with whom Burr's name has been connected. This was Margaret Moncrieffe, the daughter of a major in the British army, who was stationed with his regiment on Staten Island. She was a beautiful girl of fourteen with an emotional nature. It was inevitable that a love affair should spring up between her and the handsome young aide-de-camp, and it has been a question somewhat debated by Burr's biographers how far the affair was carried.

Miss Moncrieffe was regarded in the light of a prisoner or hostage; and she was transferred from General Putnam's care to that of General Mifflin, who was stationed further inland. This change is said to have been brought about by Burr himself. He was looking over her shoulder one day, while she was painting a bouquet; and the suspicion darted into his mind that she was using the "language

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of flowers " to convey intelligence to the enemy. It was in her new place of detention that Burr became intimate with her. A few months later Miss Moncrieffe was delivered to her friends, together with the following note from General Putnam : "Ginerole Putnam's compliments to Major Moncrieffe. Has made him a present of a fine daughter. If he don't lick her, he must send her back again ; and he will provide her with a fine good twig husband." "The substitution of twig for Whig husband," relates the heroine, "served as a fund of entertainment for the whole company."

Miss Moncrieffe subsequently became Mrs. Coghlan ; and later in life she published a volume of reminiscences, in which she speaks of Burr—not, of course, naming him—as "the conqueror of her soul." "Oh, may these pages one day meet the eye of him who subdued my virgin heart, whom the immutable, unerring laws of Nature had

pointed out for my husband, but who sacred decree the barbarous customs of society fatally violated!"

It is evident that, whatever may have been Burr's conduct toward Margar Moncrieffe, the lady herself, the person chiefly concerned, had no complaint to make of it. After recounting this affair Mr. M. L. Davis, Burr's literary executor, says: "It is truly surprising how any individual could have become so eminent as a soldier, as a statesman and as a professional man, who devoted so much time to the other sex as was devoted by Colonel Burr. For more than half a century of his life they seemed absorb his whole thoughts. His intrigues were without number, the sacred bonds of friendship were unhesitatingly violated when they operated as barriers to the indulgence of his passions. In this particular Burr appears to have been unfeeling and heartless."

Such is the estimate of Burr's




friend and biographer, and yet it is almost certainly exaggerated. Burr was all his life an excessively busy, hard-working man ; he was abstemious as respects food and drink ; he was refined and fastidious in all his tastes ; he preserved his constitution almost unimpaired to a great age. It is nearly incredible that such a man could have been the unmitigated profligate described by Mr. Davis.

Part of Burr's reputation for profligacy was due, no doubt, to that vanity respecting women of which Davis himself speaks. He never refused to accept the parentage of a child. "Why do you allow this woman to saddle you with her child, when you *know* you are not the father of it?" said a friend to him a few months before his death. "Sir," he replied, "when a lady does me the honor to name me the father of her child, I trust I shall always be too gallant to show myself ungrateful



for the favor." Burr certainly had a code of honor which he punctiliously observed. It was the code of a man of the world, dashed with a certain old-fashioned gallantry which recalls Bret Harte's Jack Hamlin, and even suggests Colonel Starbottle. Both Hamilton and Burr, the latter especially, were far from strict in their relations with women; and no doubt their life in the army, and especially their association with French officers, made them familiar with a standard of morals very different from that which had prevailed in the colonies. Extravagance was another vice of the times. Hamilton Burr, and other leading men were in perpetual state of debt and insolvency.

Burr, though eager for promotion expressed himself as "very happy the esteem and entire confidence of good old general"; and he remained with him till July, 1777, when was appointed lieutenant colonel,



placed in command of a regiment. The regiment was uninstructed and undisciplined, and its officers were mainly rich and incapable young men from the city. Burr took the bold step of ordering the most inefficient of them home, on the simple ground of utter uselessness, at the same time declaring his willingness to give them satisfaction in case any felt himself aggrieved.

Before long Burr had licked his regiment into shape; and being not only a strict disciplinarian, but also careful and considerate, tender to the sick, generous with his money, vigilant and fearless, he soon became the idol of his men. Not a blow was struck in the regiment while he remained at the head of it, although corporal punishment was customary in the Continental army.

In September of this year (1777) Burr received intelligence that the British had come out of New York and were devastating Orange County. He

at once put his regiment in motion; and by sunset he was at Paramus, sixteen miles distant. On the way he had been met by an express from General Putnam, recommending him to retreat with the public stores. But Burr, declaring that he would never fly from an enemy whom he had not seen, pushed on. At Paramus he left the greater part of his regiment, and with a few picked men went forward in the darkness. When he came within four miles of Hackensack, he learned that the enemy's advance guard was barely a mile distant. Thereupon he halted his men in a wood, ordering them to lie down and sleep, while he reconnoitred; for they were exhausted, having marched more than thirty miles since noon. Burr then, alone, crept up to the enemy's pickets, ascertained the exact situation of each one, and, turning, awakened his men. He pushed them forward in such a way that



were within a few yards of the picket before their approach was suspected. All of the advance guard were killed or captured ; and the enemy fled back to New York the next day, leaving the greater part of his booty behind him. Burr was prevented from pursuit by an order to join the main army in Pennsylvania.


During the terrible winter at Valley Forge the American army was continually harassed at night by false alarms of the enemy's approach. These alarms proceeded from an important pass known as the Gulf, about ten miles from the camp at Valley Forge, and the only means of access to it. At last, acting upon General McDougall's advice, General Washington withdrew from the detachment at the Gulf all officers who out-ranked Burr, leaving him in command. Burr immediately began a rigid system of police, visiting the sentinels every night and at all

hours of the night, and often changing their positions. During the day he employed the troops in frequent drills. The rigor of this service was not agreeable to the militia, who had been accustomed in camp to a life of idleness; and the more worthless among them concerted a mutiny, of which Burr one evening received information. That very night he ordered out the troops, having first secretly directed that the cartridges should be withdrawn from their muskets. He had also provided himself with a well-sharpened sabre. It was a clear, cold night with a bright moon; and Burr marched along the line, eying his men closely. As he came opposite the most daring of the ringleaders, the man advanced a step, and, levelling his musket at the colonel, called out, "Now is your time, my boys." Burr thereupon, with a celerity for which he was remarkable, smote the arm of the mutineer above the elbow,

and nearly severed it from his body, at the same time ordering him to take his place in the line. In a few minutes the men were dismissed ; and the arm of the mutineer was amputated the next day. No more was heard of the mutiny ; nor, while Burr remained in the Gulf, was the army at Valley Forge disturbed by a single nocturnal alarm.

At the battle of Monmouth, Burr commanded a brigade which, owing to a blunder of Washington or of a staff officer, was for some time exposed to a murderous fire. Burr had a horse shot under him, and his second in command was killed. This battle came near being fatal to Burr in another way. The heat was very great,—it was in the end of June,—and Burr had been up and busy for two nights, the night before and the night after the battle. On the third day he lay down to sleep under the shade of a tree, and awoke to find that he had been exposed for


some hours to the rays of a burning sun. He was in great pain, almost unable to walk ; and for several years afterward he suffered from chronic diarrhoea. In October, his health not improving, Burr applied for leave of absence, stipulating that it should be without pay. "Too great a regard to malicious surmises," he wrote to Washington, "and a delicacy, perhaps censurable, might otherwise hurry me unnecessarily into service, to the prejudice of my health, and without any advantage to the public." Washington, however, replied that such an arrangement was not customary, and would be unjust ; that he should have leave of absence, but that his pay must continue. And thereupon Burr, who was then absent on short leave, immediately rejoined his regiment at West Point. He was now but twenty-two years old, and looked even younger. There is a story of a farmer who, being ushered into his presence,



requested that he might see the colonel himself. "You," he said, "must be, I suppose, Colonel Burr's son."


In January, 1779, Colonel Burr was placed in command of the "lines" in Westchester County,—a debatable land, fifteen or twenty miles in length, between the American and the British frontiers. The "lines" had been, ever since the British took New York, a scene of lawlessness and misery,—Whigs abusing Tories, Tories Whigs, the British making continual forays, and the Continental soldiers plundering the inhabitants, or at least such of them as were supposed to be disaffected, without any very strict inquiry into the nature of their political opinions.

Burr was probably appointed to this difficult post at the request of that same General McDougall who procured for him the command of the Gulf near Valley Forge, and to whom he reported in his new post. Burr's first





step was to improve his position by moving the "lines" forward three miles at one end. "By this arrangement," he wrote, "the extent of my command is contracted three miles, and the distance from my left to the Sound is three miles less than before, the men more compact and the posts equidistant from the enemy." At the moment of assuming command he found that his predecessor had arranged a scouting expedition to West Farms and Morrisania. This, Burr thought, was very ill-advised; but, not wishing to appear ungracious, he consented to an expedition to Frog's Neck, a less distant point. "I expect little from it," he wrote General McDougall, "but have not much to fear." The party were gone all night, returning in the morning loaded down with plunder; and upon their heels came six or seven farmers from Frog's Neck and Rochelle "with piteous applications for stolen goods and horses."




Burr was disgusted and chagrined, but it was not long before he had revolutionized the management of the "lines." A few nights after his arrival the house of a Tory, named Gedney, was plundered, and the family insulted by soldiers who wore masks. There was no apparent clew to their identity ; and yet within twenty-four hours Burr, by means that were never discovered, had detected the offenders. He put them under arrest, compelled them to apologize to Gedney and his family, and to restore all the property that they had stolen. In the same week, on returning from an inspection of his outposts, Burr said to Lieutenant Drake, whom he had brought with him from his regiment, "Drake, that post on the North River will be attacked before morning. Neither officers nor men know anything of their duty. You must go and take charge of it. Keep your eyes open, or you will have your throat cut." Drake went. The post was attacked that

night by a company of horse. They were repulsed with loss, and Drake returned in the morning with trophies of war. "We stared," said an officer who related these events, "and asked one another, How could Burr know that!"

Burr soon brought his men under control; and, inasmuch as he treated them well, they became reconciled to his severe discipline. "He attended," wrote one of them long afterward, "to the minutest article of their comfort,—to their lodgings, to their diet. For those off duty he invented sports, all tending to some useful end. His habits were a subject of admiration. His diet was simple and spare in the extreme. He seldom slept more than an hour at a time, and that without taking off his clothes, or even his boots. Between midnight and two o'clock in the morning, accompanied by a few horsemen, he visited the quarters of all his captains, changing his route from time to time, to prevent notice of


his approach. The distance which he thus rode every night varied from sixteen to twenty-four miles ; and with the exception of two nights, in which he was otherwise engaged, he never omitted these excursions, even in the coldest and most stormy winter weather.”

Burr made a map of the territory between him and the British, showing all the roads, by-paths, morasses, etc. ; and he also prepared a register of all the inhabitants in the vicinity, noting against each man's name his politics, character, and other particulars. In order to prevent the intrusion of spies, from whom much evil had come, Burr selected certain trusty persons who were authorized to bring messages and petitions to him, all others being forbidden to come within a certain distance of headquarters. The peaceable inhabitants were protected, robbers and horse thieves were hunted down, and in every engagement which he had with the Brit-



ish he was successful. During the time of his command not a single death occurred among the soldiers, not one deserted, not one was taken prisoner.

Burr's name was revered in Westchester County for fifty years; and the value of his services can be estimated by what happened after they were withdrawn in the following spring. Of the two commanders who succeeded him, both brave men and experienced soldiers, the first was captured, and all his men except thirty were killed or made prisoners. The second was killed, and most of his officers and men were either killed or captured. Within a year after Burr's departure the outposts were drawn in, and the American frontier was placed twenty miles in rear of the line which he had successfully defended.




#### IV.

BURR left the army in the spring of 1779, thoroughly broken in health ; and yet within a few months he was twice called upon to perform a difficult military service. In June he was staying at Newburg with General McDougall. It was of the utmost importance for that officer to communicate with General Washington ; but hitherto he had failed to do so, all his messengers having been killed or captured by guards stationed in the mountain passes for that purpose. In this emergency he besought Burr to undertake the dangerous mission, and Burr accomplished it.

A month later, while Burr was at New Haven ill in bed, word came that the British, under Governor Tryon, had landed in the neighborhood, and were advancing upon the town. Burr arose, mounted a horse, and endeavored to rally the militia, who, however, became

panic-stricken, and fled. He then put himself at the head of the boy-students of Yale College, who had formed a military company; and, marching out with this formidable body, he held the British in check until the women and children and valuables had been removed to places of safety. The next day Burr took to his bed again, and remained incapable of any exertion during the succeeding autumn and winter.

As soon as he began to recover, Burr applied himself to the law, hoping to retrieve his fortune, which had been greatly impaired by expenditures during the war, and by the gifts and loans which, in this as in every other period of his life, he made with reckless generosity. In 1781 the legislature of New York passed a law that no person should practise at the bar whose loyalty to the American government could not be proved. This measure shut out the Tory lawyers, and offered to the oth-



an opportunity of which Burr was anxious to avail himself. In January, 1782, he applied at Albany for admission as a practitioner; but the rules required three years' previous study, whereas Burr had studied only six months. His admission was therefore strongly opposed by certain prominent members of the bar. Burr, however, convinced the judge then presiding that he ought, if found qualified, to be admitted on the ground of his military service; and thereupon he was turned over to the opposing lawyers for a verbal examination. This, it is needless to say, was made as severe as possible; but Burr passed it triumphantly, and was licensed as an attorney.

In the spring he took a house in Albany; and on July 2, 1782, he was married to Theodosia Prevost, widow of a major in the British army, who died in the West Indies soon after the beginning of the Revolutionary War. Burr




first met Mrs. Prevost in 1777, while he was at Ramapo in command of his regiment, and she was living at Paramu with her two small boys, her sister, Miss De Visme, and their mother. These ladies were of Swiss birth. They were intelligent and accomplished, and their house was a centre of attraction.

The reader may remember that in the account of Colonel Burr's achievement on the "lines" in Westchester County it was stated that he was absent but two nights while he remained in command. On both occasions he made a visit to the house of Mrs. Prevost, which was only about fifteen miles from his quarters though the Hudson River, two miles wide at that point, rolled between them. On those nights Burr mounted a swift nimble horse, paid his usual visit to sentinels and outposts, and then loped to the river, where he had waiting a barge, well furnished with buffalo skins, and provided with




trusty soldiers to row it. The horse was thrown, his legs were bound, and he was carefully deposited on the buffalo robes in the bottom of the boat. Half an hour's hard rowing brought them to the other side, where Burr remounted, and, after spending a few hours with his betrothed, returned in the same way, revisited his sentinels, and at dawn threw himself upon a couch for an hour or two of repose.

Mrs. Prevost is described as attractive, but not beautiful, well educated, literary in her tastes, and possessed of charming manners. She was older than Burr and of a delicate constitution. Her disposition was gentle and affectionate. Many years after her death, Burr spoke of her as "the best woman and the finest lady that he had ever known." Burr's letters to her, from first to last, express a deep affection in terms which have the ring of sincerity, although the letters written before their marriage are



often amusingly qualified by didactic remarks and commands which in a lover, and one younger than his mistress, might be thought strange. In December, 1781, Burr wrote every day to Mrs. Prevost; and the following passages are taken from his letters during that month :—

“A sick headache this whole day. I earned it by eating last night a hearty supper of Dutch sausages, and going to bed immediately after. I thought through the whole day that, if you could sit by me and stroke my head with your little hand, it would be well; and that when we are formally united, far from deeming a return of the disorder *un malheur*, I should esteem it a fortunate apology for a day of luxurious indulgence which I should not otherwise allow myself or you.” . . . “I am surprised I forgot to advise you to get a Franklin fireplace. They have not the inconvenience of stoves, are warm, save wood,




and never smoke. . . . It is of the first importance that you suffer as little as possible the present winter. It may in a great measure determine your health hereafter. I confess I have still some transient distrusts that you set so little value on your life. Remember, it is not yours alone. . . . I demand one-half of an hour every day from you: more I forbid, unless on special occasions. The children will have each their sheet, and at the given hour write, if but a single word. Burr, at this hour, is to be a kind of watchword. . . . You wrote me too much. It is, I confess, rather singular to find fault with the quantity, when matter and manner are so delightful. You must, however, deal less in sentiments and more in ideas. . . . I do not know for what reason, Theodosia; I cannot feel my usual anxiety about my health, though I know you to be and dangerously so. One reason is that I have more belief in your attention

to yourself. Your idea about the water was most delightful. It kept me awake a whole night, and led to a train of thoughts and sensations which cannot be described. . . . I have not these five days past slept more than two hours a night, and yet I feel refreshed and well."

In 1783 Burr moved to New York, having taken a house there in Maiden Lane for £200 a year, "the rent to begin when the British troops leave the city," which happened in November.

The ensuing years, which Burr devoted mainly to the law and to his family, were probably the happiest of his life. Burr was not a profound lawyer; but he was an extremely adroit, pertinacious, and successful practitioner. He conducted a law-suit as if it were a military campaign, with ambuscades, brilliant sorties, and tactics calculated to mislead and overawe the enemy. His style of speaking was concise and per-




suasive, and he had a charm of manner which captivated men and women. Yet there was perceptible in it, to persons of discernment, that tinge of insincerity which lurked in his character. John Quincy Adams notes in his diary that "Mr. Burr is a man of very *insinuating* manners and address."

Burr's fundamental defect seems to have been a lack of conscience. He possessed the sense of honor, but only in the slightest degree that of right and wrong. Yet it was impossible not to like a man so kind, so loyal, so magnanimous as Burr; and his perfect self-confidence and self-possession gave him an extraordinary power over others. "It is the man of aplomb," says Emerson, "who carries the day." Such a man was Burr. It does not appear that he ever felt shame, much less remorse or repentance, for any deed of his life. With him, to think and to act were almost the same thing. He never hesi-

tated over the future or regretted the past ; and, when all the world—a few friends excepted—reviled him, he went on his way with perfect serenity. There is something superb, one might almost say sublime, in such self-reliance ; but it would probably be impossible in a good man. There was no Christian humility or Christian self-distrust in Aaron Burr. This descendant of Puritan saints was as true a pagan as ever walked the streets of Athens or of Rome. Intellectual rather than moral excellence excited his admiration ; and he valued people and was drawn toward them almost entirely according to their intelligence and cultivation. In fact, Burr's whole conception of human life was distorted by the exaggerated part which he assigned to education and talent as compared with conduct and character.

Burr's character was essentially masculine ; but his intellect, so far as the two can be separated, was of a feminine




cast. In politics, in law, in life generally, he was always concerned with the concrete, the particular, the practical. He had no interest in the abstract or in general principles, and very little imagination or originality. His creative faculty was as slight as his critical faculty was large. It was his forte not to open a discussion, but to close it. To the material of a discussion, Burr, generally speaking, could contribute little. But, when all the principles applicable to the matter in hand, whether it were political or legal, had been advanced, when all the arguments *pro* and *con* had been stated, Burr had a masterly power of summing them up, and deducing from them the inevitable conclusions. It is a notable fact that he took no part whatever in the discussions in the *Federalist* and elsewhere which preceded the adoption of the Constitution. It is not even known whether he sided with the Federalists or with the Republicans. And



yet the two parties were contending, with many modifications and disguises and half unconsciously, for principles the most radically opposed,—the one for self-government, for government by the many, the other for government by the few, the one for local freedom, the other for centralization. These are the fundamental principles of human government, but they had no interest for Burr. The fact is significant both of his moral and intellectual deficiencies.

Burr was often pitted against Hamilton in the courts, and they divided between them the most important law business of the State. A contemporary, General Erastus Root, thus compared them: "As a lawyer and as a scholar, Burr was not inferior to Hamilton. His reasoning powers were at least equal. Their *modes* of argument were very different. Hamilton was very diffuse and wordy. His words were so well chosen, and his sentences so finely formed into a



swelling current, that the hearer would be captivated. The listener would admire, if he was not convinced. Burr's arguments were generally methodized and compact. I used to say of them, when they were rivals at the bar, that Burr would say as much in half an hour as Hamilton in two hours. Burr was terse and convincing, while Hamilton was flowing and rapturous. They were much the greatest men in this State, and perhaps the greatest men in the United States."


Theodosia, Burr's only legitimate child, was born in 1783; and his family life was ideal. March 22, 1784, his wife writes to him: "My Aaron had scarce quitted the door when I regretted my passiveness. Why did I consent to his departure? Can interest repay the sacrifice? Can aught on earth compensate for his presence? . . . Every breath of wind whistled Aaron. Every noise at the door was mingled with hope of

thy return and fear of thy perseverance, when Brown arrived with the word—*embarked*, the wind high, the water rough. Heaven protect my Aaron; preserve him, restore him to his adoring mistress!” . . .

And yet this woman was not all sentiment. Burr consulted her in his business affairs, and she assisted to manage them in his absence. In the same year he writes to her from Albany: “Mr. Watts this instant acquainted me that he is just setting off for New York. I run from court to waft you a memorandum of affection. . . . I read your memorandum ten times a day, and observed it as religiously as ever a monk did his devotion. Yesterday I burnt it. To me it seemed like sacrilege.”

The following are extracts from later letters : —

“I have been to twenty places to find something to please you, but can see



nothing that answers my wishes. You will therefore, I fear, only receive your affectionate

A. BURR."

... "I feel impatient and almost angry that I have received no letter from you, though I really do not know of any opportunity by which you could have written."

"This morning came your kind, your affectionate, your truly welcome letter of Monday evening. Nothing in my absence is so flattering to me as your health and cheerfulness. . . . Gloom, however dressed, however caused, is incompatible with friendship. It is the secret, the malignant foe of sentiment and love." . . .

"The girls must give me a history of their time from morning to night; the boys, anything which interests them,—which, of course, will interest me. Kiss for me those who love me."

(The "girls" were Theodosia, and

Natalie, a girl about the age of Theodosia, whom Burr and his wife had adopted. The "boys" were Mrs. Burr's sons by her former husband, who were always treated by Burr as his own children.)


"I have lived these three days on the letters I expected this evening, and behold the stage without a line! I have been through the rain and dark and mud, hunting up every passenger to catechize them for letters, and can scarce yet believe that I am so totally forgotten."

From Mrs. Burr :—

"Tell me, Aaron, why do I grow every day more tenacious of thy regard? Is it because each revolving day proves thee more deserving?"

From Aaron Burr :—

"Continue and multiply your letters to me. They are all my solace. The



last six are constantly within my reach. I read them once a day at least. Write me of all I have requested, and a hundred things which I have not. You best know how to please and interest your affectionate

A. BURR."

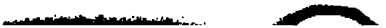
These persons, be it remembered, had been eight or nine years married when the above letters were written. Mrs. Burr, after a long and painful illness, died in the spring of 1794; and thenceforward Theodosia, the younger, served as her father's friend and confidant.

Traditions of Theodosia's beauty and intelligence still survive. Her father, to whom from her earliest years she was passionately attached, took the greatest pains with her education, especially endeavoring to make her brave, patient, and industrious. Burr has been described as a voluptuary; and so he was, within limits, but he was much more a Stoic. His activity was incessant; and

he delighted in the endurance of cold and heat, of labor and fatigue. Pride and self-reliance were the principles which he inculcated. Some years after his death, one of his numerous *protégés* was asked what in particular he had derived from Burr. "He made me iron," was the reply.

After the marriage of Natalie, Theodosia's companion, Burr wrote to the latter: "I have had three letters from Natalie. She is to travel from Nantz to Paris (about two hundred and forty-five miles) *with her maid and postilion only*: an enterprise which no woman in France under forty hath executed without shipwreck during the last hundred years. Yet Natalie will do it without injury and without suspicion. I have taught her to rely on *herself*, and *I* rely on her pride."

How much was expected from Theodosia in the way of study may be gleaned from the following plan of a journal



which her father sent to her in 1793, when she was in her eleventh year: "Learned 230 lines, which finished Horace. Heigh-ho for Terence and the Greek Grammar to-morrow. Practised two hours,—less thirty-five minutes, which I begged off. Hewlet (drawing-master) did not come. Began Gibbon last evening. I find he requires as much study and attention as Horace. So I shall not rank the reading of *him* among amusements. Skated an hour. Fell twenty times, and find the advantage of a hard head."

A year later Burr writes:—

"I really think, my dear Theo, that you will be very soon beyond all verbal criticism, and that my whole attention will be presently directed to the improvement of your style."

A month later:—

"I have received my dear Theo's two little, very little, French letters. The last left you tormented with headache




## AARON BURR

and toothache, too much for one poor little girl to suffer at one time. . . . You must fight them as well as you can till I come, and then I will engage to keep them at bay."

In another letter:—

"In case you should dine in company with Mrs. Penn, I will apprise you of one circumstance, by a trifling attention to which you may elevate yourself in her esteem. She is a great advocate for a very plain, rather abstemious diet in children. Be careful, therefore, to eat of but one dish (that a plain roast or boiled); little or no gravy or butter, and very sparingly of dessert or fruit not more than half a glass of wine; and if more of anything to eat or drink offered, decline it. If they ask for reason, *papa thinks it not good for* is the best that can be given."

This letter, so suggestive of B's favorite author, Lord Chesterfield, been much and justly criticised.



following passage, however, from a succeeding letter is equally characteristic of Burr :—

“Receive with calmness every reproof, whether made kindly or unkindly, whether just or unjust. Consider within yourself whether there is cause for it. If it has been groundless and unjust, nevertheless bear it with composure and even with complacency. . . . We must learn to bear these things ; and let me tell you that you will always feel much better, much happier, for having borne with serenity the spleen of any one than if you had returned spleen for spleen.”

In another letter :—

“Avoid, forever avoid, a smile or sneer of contempt. Never even mimic them. A frown of sullenness or discontent is but one degree less hateful.”

In 1800, Theodosia being then seventeen, Burr wrote to her :—

“You reflect, and that is a security for your conduct. . . . Many are sur-

prised that I could repose in you so great a trust as that of yourself; but I knew that you were equal to it, and I am not deceived."

A year later Theodosia was married to Joseph Alston, of South Carolina, a youth of twenty-two, well born, well educated, rich, and of high character. Mr. Madison, who met him shortly before his marriage, reported: "He appears to be intelligent, sound in his principles, and polished in his manner."

The marriage was in all respects suitable, and it proved to be happy until Theodosia and her little family were overwhelmed by that evil fortune which, during the latter half of Burr's career, seems to have pursued him and all who belonged to him.

## V.

ALTHOUGH, as has been said, Burr was never a strict party man, his political principles, so far as he had any, were those of the Whigs, Republicans or Anti-Federalists, as they were variously called. Burr's kindly disposition and his practical turn of mind both tended to make him act with the more liberal and less conservative party. He advocated the speedy abolition of slavery in the State of New York, and he was in favor of opening to the public the deliberations of the United States Senate. Burr became a member of that body in 1791, when he was but thirty-five years old, being elected in place of General Philip Schuyler, Hamilton's father-in-law, who was the Federal candidate.

In the early days of the republic the State of New York oscillated between the two parties, as it has oscillated in more recent years between the Demo-

cratic and Republican (Federal) parties ; and the city of New York had the same leaning toward Democracy then which it has now. In 1791, however, the Federalists had a majority in the Assembly ; and Burr's election was attributed to his personal popularity. General Hamilton was an honorable man, but aristocratic and unpopular. Hamilton, now Secretary of the Treasury, took a keen interest in the contest. It was, indeed, the first battle in that long political struggle between Burr and Hamilton, which continued until their final encounter on the heights of Weehawken.

In 1792 an election was to be had for the governorship of New York, an office then deemed of more dignity than a seat in the United States Senate. Burr was discussed by each party as a possible candidate,—a fact which shows both his great popularity in the State and also his want of political convictions. Hamil-



ton prevented Burr's nomination by the Federalists, and DeWitt Clinton was nominated and elected by their opponents.


In the same year Burr was spoken of as a candidate for the Vice-Presidency ; and again Hamilton vehemently opposed his nomination, describing him as follows in a letter to Rufus King : —

“Embarrassed, as I understand, in his circumstances, with an extravagant family, bold, enterprising, and intriguing, I am mistaken if it be not his object to play the game of confusion ; and I feel it to be a religious duty to oppose his career.” Burr, however, made no move at this time ; and he received but a single vote for the office of Vice-President.

In 1794, Washington, having determined to recall Gouverneur Morris from his post as minister to France, let it be known that he would appoint to that place any person who might be selected by the Republicans in Congress. A cau-

cus was thereupon held, and, as the result, Burr's name was presented to Washington; and it was much urged upon him by Madison, Monroe, and other leaders of the party. Washington, however, refused to comply with their request, stating that it had been the rule of his public life never to appoint to office any man of whose integrity he had doubts. That Hamilton, in whom Washington so much confided, was, in part at least, responsible for this decision, was no doubt the belief of Burr and his friends.

Burr served his term in the Senate, and acquired the reputation of an extremely persuasive orator. In 1797 he was a candidate for re-election; but he was defeated by his former opponent, General Philip Schuyler. This reascendency of the Federal party was due, in part at least, to the excesses of the French Revolution. At that time this country was morally dependent upon



Europe to an extent which it is now difficult to realize. On the one hand, the ideas which underlay the French Revolution aroused the utmost enthusiasm among American Republicans. A distinguished clergyman declared of the patriotic courtesans of Paris that "he could have hugged the wicked sluts,—they pleased him!" On the other hand, the insane barbarities of the French Revolutionists created a reaction in favor of the Federalists, and against those democratic ideas which had been breached, but which had not yet been put in practice.

Hamilton was honestly determined that the "crazy hulk of a constitution," as he called it, should have a fair trial; but neither he nor the other leading Federalists had any faith in the people or any confidence in republican institutions. Their ideal was a constitutional monarchy. The mildest term which Hamilton applied to Jefferson was "con-



temptible hypocrite"; and it was a serious question in the minds of other leading Federalists whether Jefferson's political principles or the utter want of principle, political or otherwise, charged against Burr, would be the more dangerous in a President of the United States. Bayard, of Delaware, a very moderate man, wrote to Hamilton, "There would be really cause to fear that the government would not survive the course of moral and political experiments to which it would be subjected in the hands of Mr. Jefferson." How oddly does this read when one remembers that the real prosperity of this country began with Jefferson's administration, and that his party remained in power for twenty-four years! Jefferson himself was hardly less prejudiced. He remarked in a private letter that the Federalists would join any "enemy, foreign or domestic, who could rid them of this hateful republic for any other government in exchange." Both.

parties were contending for fundamental principles ; and hence the extreme bitterness of feeling, hence the misapprehension of character and of motive, the animosities, the false accusations, and the duels of that intense and stirring period. It was the dying struggle of feudalism in this country.

In 1797 Burr, having been defeated by the Federalists, as just stated, began with characteristic promptitude to rebuild the Republican party ; and, as a first step, he procured his own election to the State legislature. General Schuyler wrote to Hamilton at the time : "Mr. Burr, we are informed, will be a candidate for a seat in the Assembly. His views it is not difficult to appreciate. They alarm me ; and, if he prevails, I apprehend a total change of politics in the next Assembly, attended with other disagreeable consequences." The total change and the disagreeable consequences came in due time, but not

quite so soon as General Schuyler apprehended. In the years 1797 and 1798 Burr though apparently absorbed in law and in land speculations, was quietly and secretly laying the foundations of future political success.

In 1799 he was again a member of the Assembly. At this time there were but two banks in the city of New York, both controlled by the Federalists; and so unfairly were these banks conducted that the ordinary commercial favors granted to merchants of the Federal party were withheld from those who were avowed Republicans. Burr and his friends were determined to establish a Republican bank; and, with this object in view, they asked the Assembly to charter a new company,—the Manhattan Company,—with a capital of \$2,000,000, “for the purpose of supplying the city of New York with pure water.” In the charter was a clause providing that the “surplus capital might be employed in

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any way not inconsistent with the laws and Constitution of the United States or of the State of New York." Objection was made to this clause ; and Burr, it is said, when questioned as to the object of the charter, did not deny that a bank was contemplated. But he did not so state on the floor of the House, and perhaps a majority of the Assembly were ignorant of the real object of the bill. At all events, the bill passed ; the bank was established under Republican auspices ; and Burr derived a good deal of odium from the transaction.

In the same year Burr was accused of dishonorable conduct in respect to the Holland Land Company, and he fought a duel with one of his accusers. This charge appears to have been entirely unfounded, but Burr took no pains to refute it. In allusion to this affair, Mr. Davis, his biographer, remarks : "It was his practice to let his actions speak for themselves, and to let

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the world construe them as they pleased. This was a great error, and was the source in after life of much trouble and suffering to him; yet he would not depart from it."


Mr. Davis here refers especially to the events of 1800 and of 1801, when a new President was to be chosen. John Adams and Jefferson were the candidates; and it was agreed on all sides that Jefferson could not be elected unless the State of New York should cast a Republican vote, and that the result in the State would depend upon the vote of the city. But at the preceding State election the thirteen Assemblymen chosen from the city of New York had all been Federalists, and they were elected by a large majority. In the face of these discouraging facts, Burr stood almost alone in declaring that the city and State of New York could be carried by the Republicans; and he set out to accomplish the task.



The situation was a difficult and peculiar one. The Republican party in New York was composed of three factions,—the faction of the Clintons, a strong, vigorous family of Scotch origin, with whom Burr had frequently come in collision; that of the Livingstons, a rich and powerful family, renegade Federalists, with a traditional hostility to the Clintons; and, finally, the Burrites. These last were chiefly young, high-spirited men, devotedly attached to their leader, and so welded together that they survived as a party in the State for years after Burr himself had disappeared from the political scene,—the “tenth legion” Theodosia, the younger, called them.

It was hard to reconcile these conflicting elements, but Burr’s tact and pertinacity succeeded. At that time the Presidential electors in New York were chosen by the Assembly; and Burr’s first step was to procure as nominees for the Assembly persons of such reputation

and weight that their mere names would add strength to the ticket. His list included George Clinton, former governor and leader of the Clinton faction, Brockholst Livingston, head of the Livingston family, Horatio Gates, the popular Revolutionary general, and John Swartwout, an ardent Burr-ite. The first three flatly refused to permit the use of their names ; and it was only by the utmost exercise of Burr's powers of persuasion that they were finally induced, if not to accept, at least to refrain from declining the nomination. They expected to be defeated, they had no liking for Jefferson, and they were jealous of one another. Clinton even reserved the right, which he subsequently exercised, of declaring that he had been nominated without his consent. A ticket of great strength was thus constructed ; and, inasmuch as the candidates stood out in marked contrast to the ordinary persons whose names figured upon the Federal ticket, the



campaign started off with a kind of boom for the Republicans.

Burr and Hamilton were now again pitted against each other, one directing the Republican and the other the Federal campaign. The polls were kept open for three days, and both leaders were present. Frequently they met and argued the questions at stake in the presence of great crowds of people. "Their deportment towards each other," relates Mr. Davis, "was such as comported with the dignity of two of the most accomplished and courtly gentlemen of the age in which they lived." The Republicans prevailed, and Burr received as his just reward the nomination for Vice-President. The candidates were Adams and Pinckney for the Federalists, Jefferson and Burr for the Republicans. At that time the candidates were voted for separately, as if they were all nominees for the office of President ; and the electoral vote resulted



as follows: Jefferson, 73; Burr, 73; Adams, 65; Pinckney, 64, Jay, 1.

There was, consequently, a tie between Jefferson and Burr; and the election was thrown into the House of Representatives. In that House the Federalists were in a minority. They could not, therefore, elect Adams; but it was possible for them to make Burr President instead of Jefferson, and at first a majority of them were inclined to do this. "They now," wrote Gouverneur Morris to Hamilton, "seriously and generally, after much advisement, prefer that gentleman [Burr] to Mr. Jefferson. They consider the candidates as equal in worth or (if you like the other mode of expression best) as equally void of it: with this difference, that Burr's defects do not arise from want of energy and vigor. They believe that to courage he joins generosity, and cannot be branded with the charge of ingratitude; but they consider Mr. Jefferson as in-

fectured with all the cold-blooded vices, and as particularly dangerous from the false principles of government which he has imbibed."


Hamilton, however, protested vigorously against the selection of Burr; and he wrote numerous letters upon the subject to Morris, Bayard, Sedgwick, and others.

In these letters he declared that Burr, "as true a Catiline as ever met in midnight conclave," would endeavor, if elected, to overturn the government; that he was "bankrupt beyond redemption," and that he would seek to retrieve his fortune through war and disorder. "Daring and energy must be allowed him; but he is far more cunning than wise, far more dexterous than able."

That Hamilton had an insight of Burr's character is proved by the following statement which was amply justified by Burr's subsequent career. "The truth is," he wrote in one letter, "that

Burr is a man of a very subtle imagination, and a mind of this make is rarely free from ingenious whimsies. . . . With great apparent coldness, he is the most sanguine man in the world. He thinks everything possible to adventure and perseverance."


Did Burr himself intrigue with the Federalists in order that he, instead of Jefferson, might be elected President? His enemies accused him of doing so, and the belief that this accusation was true became so general as to ruin Burr's political career ; and yet the evidence is almost all the other way. But, it is said, if Burr was innocent, why was the charge against him so vigorously made and so commonly believed? The answer is that there was an obvious conspiracy between the Clintonians and the Livingstons to destroy Burr politically. George Clinton had been Burr's rival in the contest for the nomination as Vice-President as well as on many former occasions ;



Burr had excited the jealousy of both the Clinton and Livingston factions. The fruits of this conspiracy were the scurrilous attacks of Cheetham and others upon Burr; the expulsion of Burr and his friend, John Swartwout, from the directorship of the Manhattan Bank, which followed shortly; and the total exclusion of Burr's followers from subordinate positions within the gift of Clinton, who was elected governor that year. This explains the violence with which the charges were made. And they were readily believed,—first, because Burr had acquired a reputation for mystery and intrigue; and, secondly, because, in accordance with his lifelong habit, he made no attempt to confute or silence his calumniators.

There is no evidence beyond the bare assertion of his enemies that Burr sought election by the Federalists, and there is direct evidence to the contrary. The person who put an end to the deadlock

in Congress, and procured the election of Jefferson, was Mr. Bayard, of Delaware, Hamilton's intimate friend and a leading Federalist. Mr. Bayard has left an account of the transaction. He says that at a very early stage in the proceedings he contrived to lay hold of all the doubtful votes, and was thus in a position to turn the scale toward Burr or toward Jefferson. He was inclined, despite Hamilton's protestations, to vote for Burr ; but first he wished to procure assurance as to Burr's policy upon three points, namely : (1) The support of the public credit ; (2) The maintenance of the naval system ; (3) The retention of subordinate public officers. He therefore put himself in communication with those persons who were reputed to be Burr's agents ; but, finding that they disclaimed any knowledge of his intentions or any authority to represent him, Mr. Bayard applied to General Samuel Smith, a friend of Jefferson. General Smith



sounded Mr. Jefferson upon the three points just mentioned. His report was satisfactory ; and Mr. Bayard, the very next morning after receiving it, cast his own vote for Jefferson, and caused the votes which he controlled to be cast likewise, and thus ended the contest, which at one time threatened to produce a civil war.

After the election Mr. Bayard wrote to Hamilton saying that Burr could have been elected had he taken any steps to that end ; and in a letter written by another member of Congress, Mr. Cooper, while the balloting was still in progress, there is the following statement: "All stand firm. Jefferson, eight ; Burr, six ; divided, two. Had Burr done anything for himself, he would long ere this have been President."

Further evidence might be adduced, were it required, including Burr's own written declaration at the beginning of

the contest, to show that Burr, with all his faults, was innocent of the charge which destroyed his reputation with the American people.

## VI.

As the end of Burr's term in the Vice-President's chair approached, it became apparent that he could not secure a renomination, so completely had his reputation been undermined by his enemies. He applied to Mr. Jefferson for an appointment as foreign minister, and was refused. In this situation, Burr and his friends determined upon an appeal to the people of New York. In 1804 the "regular" Republican nominee for governor in that State was Morgan Lewis, a connection of the Clintons. Burr ran as an independent candidate. The Federal party was now so shattered that it had no candidate of its own, and the question was whether the Federalists should vote for Lewis or Burr. Burr, as being much less a partisan, would have been their natural choice; but Hamilton once again threw the weight of his great influence against him.




"Hamilton," wrote Burr, Feb. 16, 1804, "is intriguing for any candidate who can have a chance of success against A. B. He would doubtless become the advocate even of De Witt Clinton if he should be the opponent." Burr was defeated, he receiving twenty-eight thousand votes, and Lewis thirty-five thousand.

For nearly twenty years Burr and Hamilton had been engaged in a political duel, and during all that time Hamilton had been unsparing in his condemnation of Burr's character and motives. It is surprising—and it shows how far gentlemanly courtesy and self-restraint will go—that the two men had always remained on good terms. In the last year of his life Hamilton wrote to a friend: "If there is a man in the world I ought to hate, it is Jefferson; with Burr I have always been personally well." In the year 1800, in one of those very denunciatory letters to his



friend Bayard, from which extracts have already been quoted, Hamilton remarked that he had "dined with Burr lately," meaning, apparently, that he had dined at Burr's own table. Already there had been several duels between Burr's adherents and his enemies,—one in particular between De Witt Clinton and John Swartwout, in which Swartwout, after being twice wounded, demanded that the duel should still go on; and it would have done so, had not the surgeons interfered. Burr had been taunted with his tame submission to Hamilton's invectives. It was an age of duelling, and both Burr and Hamilton were military men.

There is a story that Burr and his henchmen decided, in cold blood, that Hamilton must be killed for political reasons; but there is no proof of it, and it is not in accordance with Burr's character. No man was more careless or forgiving of injuries, none, perhaps, so un-



forgiving of insults. Pride was the predominant trait in his character. It is certain that Burr had already once, if not twice, required an explanation of Hamilton. Burr so stated after the duel, and Hamilton himself wrote at this time that he "was not conscious that any charges which are in circulation, to the prejudice of Colonel Burr, have originated with him, except one, which may have been so considered, and which has long since been fully explained between Colonel Burr and himself."

During the recent campaign there had been published a letter written by Dr. C. D. Cooper, containing the following paragraphs: "General Hamilton and Judge Kent have declared, in substance, that they looked upon Mr. Burr to be a dangerous man, and one who ought not to be trusted with the reins of government. . . . I could detail to you a still more despicable opinion which General

Hamilton has expressed of Mr. Burr." This letter was no cause for a duel, but it furnished a sufficient occasion for the cause which had preceded it; and on June 18, 1804, Burr sent to Hamilton the following note :—

"*Sir*,—I send for your perusal a letter signed Charles D. Cooper, which, though apparently published some time ago, has but very recently come to my knowledge. Mr. Van Ness, who does me the favor to deliver this, will point out to you that clause of the letter to which I particularly request your attention. You must perceive, sir, the necessity of a prompt and unqualified acknowledgment or denial of the use of any expression which would warrant the assertion of Mr. Cooper. I have the honor to be your obedient servant,

A. BURR."

This note was carried by William P. Van Ness, an acute lawyer, an instru-

ment of Burr, who is described as "adding to the sleek glossiness and still tread, the deadly ferocity and power of the tiger."

Hamilton in his answer, a long, argumentative document, declined to give such a reply as Burr required. "'Tis evident," he wrote, "that the phrase 'still more despicable' admits of infinite shades, from very light to very dark. How am I to judge of the degree intended?" He also stated that, if any specific remark were attributed to him, he would acknowledge or deny it; and he concluded: "I trust, on more reflection, you will see the matter in the same light with me. If not, I can only regret the circumstance, and must abide the consequences."



This last remark might perhaps have been omitted, but in all other respects Hamilton's attitude throughout the whole correspondence was as conciliatory as his self-respect would permit.

Burr, conscious of the long provocation which he had received, treated this letter as an attempt at evasion. "I regret to find in it," he wrote, "nothing of that sincerity and delicacy which you profess to value. . . . Your letter has furnished me with new reasons for requiring a definite reply." Hamilton, having read this note, stated to Van Ness that it was not such as he had hoped to receive; that, if it were not withdrawn, he could make no reply; and that Mr. Burr must pursue such course as he deemed proper. He added that, if Burr had asked him to state exactly what he had said to Dr. Cooper, he would have answered frankly, and that he believed the remark would have been found not to exceed the proper limits of political controversy.

Upon the Saturday afternoon following, Hamilton, having gone to his country-seat near the city, received a note from Van Ness, inquiring when and


where he would receive a further communication from Burr. At Hamilton's request, his town house was appointed as the place and the succeeding Monday as the time ; and Hamilton spent the intervening day in the country with his wife and seven children. On the Monday, Van Ness delivered orally a message based upon certain notes written out by Burr.

These notes put Burr's case in a stronger and truer light. "A. Burr," they began, "far from conceiving that rivalry authorizes a latitude not otherwise justifiable, always feels greater delicacy in such cases, and would think it meanness to speak of a rival but in terms of respect, to do justice to his merits, to be silent of his foibles. Such has invariably been his conduct toward Jay, Adams, and Hamilton, the only three who can be supposed to have stood in that relation to him. He has too much reason to believe that in regard to



Mr. Hamilton there has been no reciprocity. For several years his name has been lent to the support of base slanders, which he has never had the generosity, the magnanimity, or the candor to contradict or disavow. Burr forbears to particularize, as it would only tend to produce new irritations ; but, having made great sacrifices for the sake of harmony, having exercised forbearance until it approached to humiliation, he has seen no effect produced by such conduct, but a repetition of injury. . . . He is incapable of revenge, still less is he capable of imitating the conduct of Mr. Hamilton, by committing secret depredations on his fame and character. But these things must have an end."

Hamilton now called in the services of his friend Mr. Pendleton, and some further communications passed between the parties. Burr required a general disavowal of any intention by Hamilton, in any conversation, "to convey expres-





sions derogatory to the honor of Mr. Burr."


This general statement, Hamilton, of course, was unable to make; and on Wednesday, June 27, Van Ness delivered to Pendleton the challenge. It was arranged that the meeting should not occur until July 11, in order that Hamilton might have time to finish a law-suit in which he was engaged, and also to arrange his private affairs. He seems to have assumed from the first that the duel would be fatal to him. Cheetham—Burr's scurrilous traducer, a tool of the Clintons—declared after the duel that Burr spent these intervening days in practising at a mark in his garden; and the slander has been repeated by one historian after another. There is no proof of the charge,—it was denied by Burr's friends at the time,—and there is no more reason to believe it than to believe that other accusation, made by the same man on the same occasion; namely, that

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Burr went to the field wearing a suit of silk underclothes, which, he had heard, would be efficacious to stop a bullet.

The night before the duel was spent by Burr and Hamilton in arranging their private papers, and in writing what each thought might be his last words. Hamilton made a will, and left a long statement as to his conduct and motives in his transactions with Burr. In this pathetic document the frankness, the generosity, and the weak points of his character are alike apparent. His fairness to Burr is notable. He admitted that his "animadversions" had "borne very hard" upon Burr; and he expressed a hope that Burr's future career would show that Hamilton's estimate of his character had been erroneous.


He stated that he had resolved to throw away his first and possibly his second fire. Finally, Hamilton declared that he was opposed in principle to duelling, but that, nevertheless, he would



meet Burr, because, should he decline to do so, his future political usefulness would be destroyed. In other words, he would do a certain evil, in order that a possible good might be obtained. This was the fatal principle, more than once acted upon, which marred Hamilton's otherwise honorable career.

Burr wrote a long letter to Theodosia, requesting that she would burn all of his letters which might injure any one; that, in case of his death, tokens of his remembrance should be given to his stepsons, to Natalie, and others, and that provision should be made for his slaves and servants. The letter concluded with these words:—

“You have completely satisfied all that my heart and affections had hoped or even wished. With a little more perseverance, determination, and industry, you will obtain all that my ambition or vanity had fondly imagined. Let your son have occasion to be proud that he had a mother. Adieu, Adieu.”




To her husband also he wrote a long and characteristic letter, especially entreating him to "stimulate and aid Theodosia in the cultivation of her mind." He added a characteristic postscript: "If you can pardon and indulge a folly, I would suggest that Madame —, too well known under the name of Leonora, has claims on my recollection. She is now with her husband at St. Jago of Cuba."

Not a shadow of a misgiving crossed Burr's mind, before or after the duel, that his conduct was in any sense deserving of blame. Nor was it, according to the code which then prevailed; and he knew no other. The code must be both Burr's and Hamilton's justification; and how strongly it was intrenched in public opinion appears from the following passage in the diary of Gouverneur Morris, written two days after the duel: "Clarkson said to me on Thursday, 'If we were truly brave, we should not accept

a challenge; but we are all cowards.' There is no braver man living than Clarkson, and yet I doubt whether he would so far brave the public opinion as to refuse a challenge." Late at night, Burr threw himself upon a couch in his library; and when his faithful friend, John Swartwout, entered the house at daybreak, he found him quietly sleeping.

Under the heights of Weekawken, and accessible only at low tide, there was a grassy ledge or shelf, which had been the scene of many encounters. Here on July 11, 1804, in all the peaceful beauty and freshness of early morning in midsummer, Burr and Hamilton met. The preliminaries were soon arranged. As Pendleton, Hamilton's second, gave him his pistol, he asked, "Will you have the hair-spring set?" "*Not this time,*" was the reply.

When the word was given, Burr fired. Hamilton started forward, with a convulsive movement, reeled, involuntarily



discharging his pistol, and fell headlong upon the ground.\*

Burr sprang toward him with an expression of pain upon his face ; but Van Ness seized him by the arm, and hurried him down the bank to the boat. Hamilton, being lifted up, revived for a moment, and gasped, "This is a mortal wound, doctor." He then relapsed into unconsciousness, but was revived again by the fresh air of the river, as they brought him home. "Pendleton knows," he said, endeavoring to turn toward his friend, "that I did not intend to fire at him." As the boat approached the shore, he said : "Let Mrs. Hamilton be sent for immediately. Let the event be gradually broken to her, but give her hopes."

He lingered in great suffering until two o'clock in the afternoon of the following day.

\*There is some evidence that Hamilton fired first. See especially a letter from Burr to Charles Biddle first published in 1885 in Mr. Biddle's autobiography.

The excitement in the city was tremendous, and the sorrow over Hamilton's death was almost exceeded by the indignation against Burr. The whole town took part in the funeral, amidst the booming of cannon and the tolling of bells, and listened to the eulogy pronounced by Gouverneur Morris.

The death of Hamilton had something of the same effect in making duelling odious which the death of President Garfield had in making the spoils system odious. And yet, irrational as the duel now seems, it had, like every other human institution of long standing, its good side. There is not only something heroic, but there is something which tends to foster an heroic type of character, in the willingness of a man like Hamilton to sacrifice his life, and what was far more dear to him, the interests of his wife, his children, and his friends to that imponderable, intangible, invisible thing, that "breath" which "flies from you to me,"—the sense of honor.

## VII.

JULY 21, 1804, "Aaron Burr, Esquire, Vice-President of the United States," was indicted for murder ; and on the same day, at evening, he, with John Swartwout, entered a barge at Richmond Hill, and under cover of the night was conveyed down the river. At daybreak the boat grazed the lawn of Commodore Truxton's residence at Perth Amboy, in New Jersey ; and the commodore, who was a friend of both Hamilton and Burr, received Burr kindly, and entertained him till horses could be procured to take him further.

In a long letter published a few days later in the New York *Evening Post*, Commodore Truxton said : "During the time Colonel Burr was with me, but little was said of the duel. . . . He appeared to me to feel much more sorrow and regret than I have observed in any other person on the occasion, though I have seen many



who expressed unfeigned regret, and I was certain that they felt it."

From New Jersey Burr went South, where, in general, he was very well received. In the mean time he had been indicted for murder in New Jersey also; and he wrote to his daughter: "You have doubtless heard that there has subsisted for some time a contention of a very singular nature between the two States of New York and New Jersey. The subject of dispute is, Which shall have the honor of hanging the Vice-President?"

Burr kept away from those two States, and in the following winter resumed his duties as Vice-President at Washington. On February 4 began the famous trial in the Senate of Judge Chase, of Maryland, which lasted a month, and was an occasion of much form and ceremony. Burr won great praise by his conduct of the trial. "He presided," it was said in a contemporary account, "with the dignity and impartiality of an angel, but



with the rigor of a demon." The day after the trial ended, his term being about to expire, Burr took leave of the Senate ; and perhaps nothing in the career of this remarkable man is more significant of his power than the impression which he produced upon that occasion. Most of those who heard his short address were his political opponents, not a few were his personal enemies, and yet the effect of it was prodigious. Many were in tears when he concluded, and one senator who was asked on the following day, how long the Vice-President spoke, replied that "he could form no idea, it might have been an hour, and it might have been but a moment: when he came to his senses, he seemed to have awakened as from a kind of trance." Burr himself, remarking upon a newspaper report of the proceedings, wrote to *Theodosia* : —

"It is true that I made a talk, as was decent and proper, to the Senate on leav-

ing them formally. There was written or prepared, except that been some days on my mind to say something. It was the solemnity, the expectation, and the interest saw strongly painted in the count of the auditors that inspired what was said. I neither shed tears assumed tenderness, but tears flowed abundantly. The story in this paper is rather awkwardly and pompously told."


March 4, 1805, two days after leave-taking in the Senate, Jefferson entered upon his second term as President and George Clinton, Burr's chief political opponent, was sworn in as his successor. Burr was now an exile from New York. His estate, Richmond Heights, had been sold at a sacrifice to pay his debts and he was without money or position, but as serene and self-confident as ever. He turned toward the West.

In the West the Republican pa

dominated, and freer notions of duelling prevailed there than those which were beginning to obtain at the East. For these reasons Burr was received with great honor. He left Philadelphia on horseback April 10, 1805, and reached Pittsburg in nineteen days. Thence he floated down the Ohio in a sort of house-boat, stopping a few miles below Marietta (Ohio), at the island of Blennerhassett, which was owned and occupied by an eccentric Irishman of that name. Burr fascinated both Blennerhassett and his wife, and they shared in his subsequent enterprises. At Nashville, Burr was entertained by General Jackson, whom he described as "one of those frank, ardent souls that I love to meet." At Fort Massac, on the Cumberland, he met General James Wilkinson, then in command of our Western forces. Wilkinson was an old friend of Burr; they had been companions in the expedition to Quebec, and they had corre-

sponded at intervals ever since. The general provided Burr with a barge manned by soldiers, and gave him letters to the chief citizens of New Orleans. "I hear so many pleasant things of Orleans," Burr wrote to Theodosia, "that I should certainly (if one-half of them are verified on inspection) settle down there, were it not for Theodosia and her boy ; *but they will control my fate.*" Upon his return from New Orleans, where he was entertained like a prince, Burr again met Wilkinson, who said afterward that "Burr seemed to be revolving some great project, the nature of which he did not disclose." It is significant, however, that during the following winter, which Burr spent in Philadelphia, maturing his plans, Wilkinson received from Burr six letters in cipher.

In the spring Burr evidently had thoughts of relinquishing his Western designs, for he applied again to Jefferson for a foreign appointment. The Presi-



dent refused it on the ground that he had forfeited the confidence of the public. Burr took the refusal with his accustomed good nature, dined with the President once more, and in the following July sent forward Samuel, brother of John Swartwout, with letters in cipher to General Wilkinson. Burr was so cautious in communicating his designs, and especially in putting them upon paper, that it is difficult to say exactly what they were. It is certain that he intended to establish a colony; for he had purchased a tract of land comprising 400,000 acres, far to the south-west, beyond the Mississippi, on the banks of the Washita, a tributary of the Red River. \$5,000 had been paid down, the total price being but \$40,000. It is estimated that Burr raised, all together, about \$50,000, most of this sum being contributed by deluded relatives. In a letter Jefferson speaks of Mr. Alston's having indorsed Burr's notes to a large


amount. It is certain also that Burr intended to take advantage of the Western hostility to the Spaniards to drive them out of Mexico and to establish an hereditary empire there, with himself on the throne and Theodosia's boy as the heir apparent. It is possible that he expected to include Louisiana and some of the Western States in his new dominions. Mr. Henry Adams cites a letter written by the British minister at Washington to the Foreign Office at London, in which he states that Burr, whose term as Vice-President was then about to expire, had offered his services to the British government, "particularly in endeavoring to effect a separation of the western part of the United States from that which lies between the Atlantic and the mountains."

It must be remembered in extenuation that a division between East and West was then considered probable and expedient by many leading persons.



Burr's schemes justified Hamilton's analysis,—that he was “the most sanguine man in the world,” and that “he believed all things possible to daring and energy”; but they were not quite so mad as they now seem. The country was at that time on the verge of war with Spain, and Burr only expected to anticipate matters a little. Wilkinson, being in command on the border, had it in his power to precipitate a war; and this apparently is what Burr expected him to do. Among the papers which Samuel Swartwout carried to Wilkinson from Burr was the following letter to Wilkinson from Burr's associate, Mr. Dayton, of New Jersey :


“*Dear Sir*,—It is now well ascertained that you are to be displaced in next session. Jefferson will affect to yield reluctantly to the public sentiment, but yield he will. Prepare yourself, therefore, for it. You are not a man to de-





spair . . . when such projects offer in another quarter. Are you ready? Are your associates ready? Wealth and glory, Louisiana and Mexico!"

Wilkinson has left three huge volumes of memoirs, which show him to have been a vain, shallow, bragging, egotistical man; and, if he ever intended to become a conspirator with Burr, he must have changed his mind, for upon the receipt of Burr's communications he sent a message to the President informing him of Burr's designs. Wilkinson then patched up a hasty agreement with the Spaniards, fortified New Orleans, proclaimed martial law, and posed as the savior of his country. Burr, never a good judge of character, had mistaken his man. He made other similar mistakes; for he sought assistance in his illegal, and perhaps traitorous, schemes from several high officers of the army and navy, Commodore Truxton and




General Eaton in particular, who had grievances against the government.

Meanwhile, ignorant of Wilkinson's course, Burr was travelling slowly down the Ohio, giving out that his expedition had received the secret approval of the government, and collecting recruits at every stopping-place. Boats and supplies were purchased and contracted for; and Mr. Alston, Theodosia, Blennerhassett and his wife, were all busy with preparations. The whole Western country was now full of rumors as to Burr's intentions; and at Frankfort, in Kentucky, the district attorney procured his arrest on the charge of conspiring to injure a foreign power with which the United States were at peace. A long and exciting trial followed, in which the accused was defended by Henry Clay, and Burr himself made an eloquent address to the court. The result was a triumphal acquittal, which the people of Frankfort celebrated by a grand ball.


From Frankfort, Burr went back to Nashville, and thence, with about sixty men, dropped down the river to Bayou Pierre, thirty miles above Natchez. But by this time the President's proclamation against Burr had reached the scene. There was another arrest, followed by another trial, at which Burr's eloquence procured a second acquittal. But the game was now plainly lost. Further legal proceedings were set on foot; and Burr, abandoning his companions, disguised himself as a boatman, crossed to the eastern side of the Mississippi, and disappeared in the wilderness.

A few weeks later, on a cold evening in February, two young lawyers, one of whom was named Perkins, were playing backgammon in a cabin of the village of Wakefield, in Washington County, Alabama. About ten o'clock they heard the tramp of horses; and, going to the door, they found two travellers on horseback, one of whom, from his dis-



tinguished appearance and commanding air, Perkins immediately concluded to be Burr. The travellers inquired the way to the house of one Colonel Hinson, about seven miles distant; and, when they had gone, Perkins proposed to his companion that they should follow and endeavor to arrest them. The other refused; and Perkins thereupon sought out a neighboring deputy sheriff, who accompanied him to Hinson's house, which they reached shortly before midnight. It was agreed that Perkins should remain hidden in the woods while the sheriff should reconnoitre and discover, if possible, whether the suspected traveller was really Burr, returning to Perkins so soon as he had ascertained the fact.

The sheriff found the strangers about sitting down to supper before a cheerful fire. He joined them; and, although he soon discovered the identity of Burr, he became so infatuated with Burr's engaging manners and pleasant conversation



that he resolved to have  
resting him, whatever  
be. This resolve he com-  
municate to Perkin  
Burr had gone to bed  
stretched himself before  
calmly went to sleep, he  
shiver in the woods.  
ever, after waiting an hour  
what had happened, and  
out, travelled all night,  
reached Fort Stoddart,  
River, commanded by Col  
Major-general, Gaines.  
the next morning the  
file of troopers, had reached  
highway, and arrested  
of the United States.

The captain determined  
prisoner through the win-  
dow, and in two weeks  
made. The guard consisted  
of troopers, commanded by  
strictly enjoined to hold

with Burr, lest they should be overcome by his blandishments. The journey was a hard one. It was made in the spring, when the water was high, and the travelers were often obliged to swim their horses across rivers and swollen streams. Swamps and quicksands presented even greater dangers, and hostile Indians were always hovering about their path. Through all these perils and difficulties the indomitable Perkins pushed on at the extraordinary rate of forty miles a day. Burr, it need scarcely be said, was never sick nor sorry; and on March 26 the party arrived at Richmond, Virginia, that place having been designated by the government. Then followed a remarkable trial, presided over by Marshall, chief justice of the Supreme Court, Jefferson himself continually advising the prosecuting attorney by letters from Washington, and showing an indecent eagerness for the conviction of the prisoner. The trial became a political affair,

the Federalists supporting Burr by way of annoying the administration. Burr was treated with great consideration, being provided with luxurious quarters, and having his friends about him. General Jackson was in Richmond; and he made a street speech, defending Burr, and denouncing the hostility of the government. Burr sent for Theodosia and her husband, writing to her, in different letters, as follows:—


“I beg and expect of you that you will conduct yourself as becomes my daughter, and that you manifest no signs of weakness or alarm. . . . Remember, no agitation, no complaints, no fears or anxieties on the road, or I renounce thee. . . .

“I may be immured in dungeons, chained, murdered in legal form; but I cannot be humiliated or disgraced. If absent, you will suffer great solicitude. In my presence you will feel none.”

The trial lasted for weeks, and the



ablest lawyers in the United States took part in it; but Burr himself was his own chief defender. "He appeared in court," relates Mr. Parton, "attired with scrupulous neatness, in black, with powdered hair and queue. His manner was dignity itself,—composed, polite, confident, impressive. He had the air of a man at perfect peace with himself, and simply intent upon the business of the scene. It was observed that he never laughed at the jokes of the counsel. His speeches were short, concise, exact. They were uttered with such impressive distinctness that there are men now living who, after the lapse of fifty years, can repeat phrases and sentences which they heard fall from his lips during the trial." According to our laws the jury in a criminal case must return a verdict of "guilty" or "not guilty," no qualified form being permissible. But in Burr's case the jury brought in a kind of Scotch verdict, as follows :—



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“We, of the jury, say that Aaron Burr is not proved to be guilty under the indictment by any evidence submitted to us. We therefore find him not guilty.”

Burr protested against the form of this verdict, but, as some of the jury refused to change it, it was accepted, and the ordinary form of “not guilty” was entered on the record. Upon the conclusion of this trial for treason, another trial for misdemeanor was immediately begun; and it ended with a verdict of acquittal upon a technicality. Six months were consumed in the two proceedings. In the autumn Burr was entertained at Baltimore by Luther Martin, one of his counsel. How he spent the winter is not known; but he had now determined to seek support in Europe for his designs against Mexico. In June, 1808, after a most painful parting with Theodosia, who came on to New York to bid him good-by, and sat up with him the whole night before his depart-

ure, Aaron Burr, former Vice-President of the United States, once the rival of Hamilton at the bar and of Jefferson in politics, was secretly conveyed on board a packet ship, and under an assumed name, like an escaping felon, sailed for England.

## VIII.


A FEW days before Burr arrived in London, in July, 1808, Joseph Bonaparte entered Madrid as king of Spain. This event was fatal to Burr's design of obtaining assistance from England in wresting Mexico from the Spanish, for England immediately took the part of the dethroned Spanish king. Nevertheless, with characteristic promptitude, Burr presented his letters at the foreign office on the very day of his arrival; and he had interviews subsequently with many official persons, but without result. The English ministry looked upon him with suspicion, and were even inclined to forbid his residence in London. Burr, however, with his usual audacity, declared that he was born a British subject, which was, of course, true, and that he still remained such, notwithstanding that little affair of the Revolution, and consequently could not be ban-



ished from Great Britain. This preposterous claim was gravely referred to the law officers of the crown, and meanwhile Burr was hospitably received by the most interesting people in the capital. He had the *entrée* of Holland House, was entertained by the Earl of Bridgewater, met Lamb, knew Godwin intimately, and lived in the closest intercourse with Jeremy Bentham, whom he almost persuaded to take up his residence on the table-lands of Mexico.

Burr wrote to Theodosia by every mail; and during the whole period of his exile he kept a diary addressed to her, and intended for her eyes alone. His profound affection for Theodosia and her child is apparent in his letters, from which the following extracts are taken :—

“Some obscure hints in one of your letters have saddened my heart. From *son père* I have merited neither suspicion nor reserve. . . . Have you forgotten the



mad project of going to England? the anxiety and misery it cost us for some days? I should have thanked the man who had thus treated my child. Indeed, my dear Theodosia, such things sink into my soul. They seem to invade the very sanctuary of happiness. . . . Dear little Gampy,— tell me a great deal about him, or I shall not value your letters. Indeed, I will return them unopened. Is not that good Irish? . . . If you had one particle of invention or genius, you would have taught A. B. A. his a, b, c, long before this. God mend you. His fibbing is an inheritance, which pride, an inheritance, will cure. His mother went through that process. . . . The letter of A. B. A. at the foot of yours was far the more interesting. I have studied every pot-hook and trammel of his first literary performance to see what rays of genius could be discovered. . . . My letters to others are always ready for the foreign mail; but



toward you a desire to say something at the last moment, a reluctance resembling that of parting,— but all this you know and feel.”

After a stay of six months in London, Burr went northward by coach. He stopped at Oxford long enough to defend the philosophy of Bentham in one of the University Common-rooms, and then pushed on to Edinburgh, where he was received with the most flattering attentions by the grandees and celebrities of the place, including Walter Scott, Jeffrey, and the Duchess of Gordon. Burr was visited by some gleams of hope at this time. Cobbett, who knew him in the United States, had a plan for bringing him into the British Parliament; and in February he was summoned back to London, where he had several interviews upon the subject of Mexico with Lord Melville, but it all came to nothing. During his second residence in London Burr began to feel a pressure of poverty,

from which he was never afterwards while he remained abroad. payments due from persons United States upon which he did were not made; and, while Burr was staying with Bentham in London, he anticipated an arrest for debt. On his credit, be it recorded, he refrained from borrowing money of his venerable father but instead moved to an obscure London and changed his name. "The lenient heart of Jeremy Bentham wrote in the diary, "shall not be saddened by the spectacle of his arrest."

Shortly after this, and perhaps in part to his change of name, he was seized by emissaries of the office; and he was placed in custody as a messenger, who took him to his house. In this disagreeable situation Burr comforted himself with his philosophic serenity, reading such books as he found in the house, playing


with the messenger and his wife till 11 P.M., and then engaging in a game of chess which lasted, as the diary relates, "till the poor fellow [the messenger] was almost crazed."

After a few days' detention, Burr was released upon condition that he should leave England, transportation being offered him to any country which he might select. He chose Sweden, and proceeded to Stockholm, where he at once became a favorite in the highest society of the place. "An officer of rank," he sets down in his diary, "remarked to me that I spoke French much better than English, and inquired which of the European languages the native language of the Americans most resembled." Burr liked the Swedes, finding them more congenial than the English. He went to a concert at Stockholm. "Every countenance was affected by those emotions to which the music was adapted. In England you



see no expression painted on the v  
at a concert. All is sombre and g  
They cry Bravo ! Bravissimo ! with  
same countenance that they G—d i  
their servants and their government

Wherever Burr went, he carried  
him an oil painting of Theodosia ; a  
Stockholm he had it retouched by B  
a celebrated artist. In the diar  
writes : "To Breda's, where passe  
hour looking at your picture. I  
exceedingly struck and alarmed to s  
pale and faded. Why was not this  
ceived before ? Perhaps it may  
from being placed among his portr  
which are very high-colored. Yet  
impression that it is faded is fixed o  
mind, and has almost made me sup  
tious." Some weeks later he not  
the diary : "Yesterday opened  
picture. It is in perfect order. f  
opening it at Stockholm, I have ca  
it the whole way (200 miles) on my  
Indeed, madam, you *gêned* me n




little. You are now hung up in my room, so that I can talk with you." And again, after packing up for another journey: "Done. Even the picture all packed. I bade you *bon soir* a dozen times before I shut you up in that dark case. I can never do it without regret. It seems as if I were burying you alive."

At the end of October, 1809, Burr left Sweden, crossing in an open boat to Elsinore on the coast of Denmark. At Göttingen he became intimate with Prof. Heeren. At Weimar he met Goethe, dined with the ducal family, and, falling in love with a lady of the court circle, tore himself away abruptly.

His hopes were revived by news that the emperor had given his assent to the independence of Mexico. February 16, 1810, he arrived in Paris, and made every effort to obtain an interview with Napoleon or with some person in his confidence. He waited upon various kings and dukes, wrote letters and me-


morials, but all to no purpose ; and, after a month of these fruitless endeavors, he applied for a passport, in order that he might return to the United States. The passport was refused, the refusal being probably due to General Armstrong, an adherent of Jefferson, who was then the American minister at Paris. Burr was now in a desperate situation. "This matter is rather grave," he notes in the diary. "Winter approaches. No prospect of having leave to quit the empire, and still less of any means of living in it. . . . I should be glad of a good fire, but see no prospect."

The story of his continually frustrated attempts to procure the passport gives one the painful impression of a nightmare. Once it was granted, made out but lost in transmission ; and Burr spent five weeks in a vain attempt to trace through the mazes of French bureaucracy all this weary per



though in straits for money, homesick, and most eager to escape from his imprisonment in France, he preserved his equanimity, and amused himself as much as he could. The nearest approach in his diary to melancholy or downheartedness is found in the following paragraph: "At 10 to the club to read newspapers and hear the news, which I find is of some consequence to me, if, indeed, anything be of any consequence." At last, in July, 1811, the passport was procured by the kind intervention of the Duke of Bassano and Baron Denon.

During this time Burr existed chiefly, if not entirely, on money borrowed from various people, especially from the Duke of Bassano, who lent him a considerable sum. Burr left directions in his will for its repayment, but he did not leave the necessary funds. Mr. Edward Griswold, of New York, also befriended him with a loan of money. Shortly before leaving Paris, he received the fol-



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lowing letter from Theodosia, the  
for nearly a year, so irregular were  
mails: "I have written a second to  
the gentlemen who promised me the  
ply of funds; but there is little  
hoped from him. . . . His conduct  
serious addition to all the accumulated  
difficulties which already press in  
us, and which would absolutely  
whelm any other being than you.  
Indeed, I witness your extraordinary  
fortitude with new wonder at every  
misfortune. Often, after reflecting on  
subject, you appear to me so superior  
so elevated above all other men, that  
template you with such a strange  
ure of humility, admiration, reverence,  
love, and pride that very little  
stition would be necessary to make  
worship you as a superior being.  
enthusiasm does your character express  
me. When I afterward revert to  
self, how insignificant do my best  
ities appear! My vanity would

greater if I had not been placed so near you ; and yet my pride is our relationship. I had rather not live than not be the daughter of such a man."

October 1, 1811, Burr sailed on the American ship *Vigilant*, bound for home ; but within a few hours the ship was captured by a British frigate, and taken to Yarmouth. Burr went up to London ; and then followed another wretched period of six months, during which he endeavored to procure, first, the means to pay his passage home,—for he could not recover the money paid to the *Vigilant*,—and then an opportunity. Bentham and his other friends welcomed him, but he was in difficulties which would have weighed any other man to the ground. One day he records in the diary: "Have left in cash two half-pence, which is much better than one penny, because they jingle ; and thus one may refresh one's self with the music."


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Burr, though still buoyant, was now a little demoralized ; or it may be that the weaknesses of his character, though not really more pronounced, were more apparent at this time. He lay late in the morning. His room and his papers were always in disorder. He put off from day to day what was necessary to be done. When he had money, he gave it away or spent it foolishly. The following is a characteristic entry in the diary: "Bought a pair of pantaloons, which I did not want, 20s. My 10 pounds is reduced to 60s., and thus I progress." He was full of schemes for raising money,—by improving the steam-engine, by the sale of a new process for constructing false teeth, by speculation in the shares of the Holland Land Company, by making vinegar out of wood; but none of these succeeded. At last he sold some of the books and trinkets intended for Theodosia and her boy, borrowed twenty pounds of his friend,

Mr. Reeve, at the foreign office, and in March, 1812, paid his passage money in the ship *Aurora*, bound for Boston from Gravesend.

Noon was the time of sailing; but Burr, owing to a series of accidents and mistakes, did not reach Gravesend until the vessel was five hours on her way down the river. He hired two men to row him, drawing upon a friend in London to pay them; and at sunset, the weather being cold and blustering, they started in a small skiff to overtake the ship. It was a question whether they would succeed in doing so; and, if they failed, Burr would be left in England without a penny and with every resource exhausted. And yet, even in this perilous situation, he calmly lay down in the bottom of the boat, covered himself with the great-coats of the men, and slept soundly until midnight, when he awoke to find that they had overhauled the *Aurora* twenty-seven miles from Gravesend.






The worst misfortunes of Burr's life were yet in store for him. About six weeks after his return to New York he received a letter from Theodosia in South Carolina, saying that her boy was dead. He was eleven years old, and had already given proof of such courage and talents as might have been expected from his ancestry. Theodosia's health was completely shattered by the event; and some months later, her husband being then governor of the State, and unable to leave it, she embarked for New York on the schooner *Patriot*, attended by her maid and by a doctor whom Burr had sent. The *Patriot* was never heard of afterward, and was supposed to have foundered in a gale off Cape Hatteras. The agony of apprehension, and at last of certainty, endured by the husband and father is apparent in the letters which they exchanged. Mr. Alston never recovered from the blow, and died a few years later. Some months after the loss

of Theodosia, in writing to a friend, whose child had died, Burr said: "Ever since the event which separated me from mankind, I have been able neither to give nor to receive consolation."

Of Burr's remaining years the tale is soon told. He hung out a modest tin sign in the city of New York, and at the age of fifty-six began life again as a lawyer. His old friend, Colonel Troup, who had now retired, lent him a law library; and many of his former adherents called upon him, and gave him business. He appears to have had a considerable practice, especially at first; but his practice appears also to have been of a rather obscure kind, and not such as brought him much into court. It is probable that no one cared to employ as his advocate before a jury a lawyer held in such evil repute as Burr. He was cut right and left by former acquaintances, subjected to a thousand rebuffs, and held in such general odium




that life would have been intolerable to a man of less courage and serenity. And yet, as regards the chief causes of this odium,—namely, his alleged treachery to the Republican party and his duel with Hamilton,—it was undeserved.

We have the following description of his appearance in the year 1823: "His head was well shaped. His forehead was high, protruding, but narrow directly over the eyes, and widening immediately back. His feet and hands were peculiarly small, the nose rather large, with open, expanding nostrils, and the ears so small as almost to be a deformity. His face bore in repose a sad and melancholy air. He wore his hair—which, till quite late in life, was long and thick, excepting the front of the head—massed up at the top, held by a small shell comb, the whole head profusely powdered. His usual dress was a single blue-breasted coat, with standing collar, a buff waistcoat and dark trousers. In winter he wore a fur cap and buckskin mittens."

In his old age, Burr married a rich widow, named Jumel, somewhat against her inclination, taking the fortress almost by storm, and lived happily with her until a coolness arose between them from the fact that Burr had muddled away in speculation so much of her fortune as he could lay hands upon. Nevertheless, though they separated, his wife retained a kindly friendship for him.

This second marriage took place when Burr was seventy; and in the same year he became the father of an illegitimate child, to whom he left a legacy. In the same year, also, we find him writing from Albany to his partner: "Arrived this evening between six and seven o'clock, having been forty-five hours in the stage without intermission, except to eat a hearty meal. Stages in very bad order. . . . The night was uncomfortable; the curtains torn and flying all about, so that we had plenty of fresh air. . . . Came neither fatigued nor



sleepy." But even Aaron Burr could not live forever. In 1833, being then seventy-seven, he suffered a slight shock of paralysis, from which he recovered sufficiently to resume his business. A few months later, however, he had another shock, and lay ill and helpless at his office, which was also his home. In this predicament he was visited by an old friend, a Scotchwoman, whose father, an officer in the British army, had been intimate with Burr. This lady, having lost her property, was then keeping a boarding-house in what was once the residence of Governor John Jay; and thither she caused Burr to be brought. Here, with his books, pictures, and relics about him, and kindly cared for, Burr spent the next two years.

In the summer of 1836 the Jay house was to be torn down, and Burr's friends removed him upon a litter to Port Richmond in Staten Island. As the summer advanced, his strength declined, though


his mind remained as clear as ever. He was visited frequently by a clergyman, who read to him and prayed for him. On the last day of Burr's life this clergyman questioned the old colonel as to what belief he had in a future state and in the forgiveness of his own sins. "Mr. Burr answered," he relates, "with deep and evident emotion, 'On that subject I am coy.' " This characteristic sentence was the last that he uttered. He died at two o'clock in the afternoon of September 14, 1836, being then eighty years and seven months old. In accordance with his own request, he was buried in Princeton, at the feet of those godly men, his father and grandfather, the two presidents of the college, who lie there, side by side.

One who reads Burr's life can hardly help asking the question, Did he believe in himself, or was he consciously and intentionally a bad man? The true answer would seem to be that Burr re-

garded himself as, on the whole, an exemplary character. A man who is deficient in moral sense cannot of course be aware of the deficiency ; for, if he were so, the deficiency would cease to exist. Moreover, Burr's worst trait was his tendency to deceive ; and it is notorious that one who habitually deceives others is always, in the end, his own chief victim. The practice is destructive to self-knowledge. It must be admitted that Burr was a profligate and, probably, a traitor. It must be admitted that he was dishonest and insincere, that he can be defended from the charge of lying only by confessing that he was guilty of misrepresentations which bear a family resemblance to lies, that he spent and gave away other people's money as lavishly as he did his own.

These are grave faults ; but on the other side must be considered Burr's courage and fortitude, his generosity, his magnanimity, and, above all, his capac-

ity for family affection. No heartless villain, such as Burr has been represented, could have won and retained the love of such a wife and of such a daughter as Burr had. When all the other witnesses have been heard, let the two Theodosias be summoned, and especially that daughter who showed toward him an affectionate veneration unsurpassed by any recorded in history or romance. Such an advocate as Theodosia the younger must avail in some degree, even though the culprit were brought before the bar of Heaven itself.





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VI. LIFE OF AARON BURR. By Charles Burr Todd. (Pamphlet. New York, 1879: S. W. Green, 16 Jacob Street.) Good and readable.

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